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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted of the early childhood programs in the McAllen (Texas) Independent School District. This qualitative study used data collected through observations, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires, and site visits. Current practices were described and compared to developmentally appropriate practices as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Areas of comparison included organization, philosophy, curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment, and parent involvement. Issues discussed include motor development, fine arts education, multicultural education, access to developmentally appropriate materials, the use of students' primary language, and staff development. The 17 findings and recommendations include the following: (1) reconfigure early childhood classroom facilities to more fully develop children's autonomy and independence; (2) support articulation among teachers across grade levels to close the gap between expected behaviors for kindergarten and first-grade children; (3) revise curricula around a developmental continuum that supports continuous progress education; and (4) create outdoor learning centers that integrate motor, cognitive, and social learning development. (Eight appendixes include evaluation materials, interview questions, teaching strategy usage by grade level, and retention rates.) (MDM)

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Early Childhood Education in the McAllen Independent School District

A Contracted Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MCALLEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

Author:
Dr. Judith Kieff

This paper reports the results of a study of the early childhood programs in McAllen Independent School District. The study was conducted from August to February of 1993. A qualitative research design was used. Data was collected through observations, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires, and site visitations.

Current practices were described and compared to Developmentally Appropriate Practice as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987).

Areas of comparison included organization, philosophy, curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment, and parent involvement. Issues discussed included motor development, fine arts education, multicultural education, access to developmentally appropriate materials, the use of students' primary language, and staff development.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Finding 1: Principals have general knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practice but are not always able to articulate enough specific information to facilitate change in practice or philosophy among teachers and/or parents. (p. 8-10)

Recommendation:

Provide professional development for principals regarding the constructivist theory of learning, continuous progress education, emergent literacy and the whole language philosophy, social-emotional development in early childhood, the role of play in development and learning, and the evaluation of early childhood learning environments and teaching strategies.

Finding 2: A strong grade level orientation among district teachers leads to the practice of individualizing instruction through remediation techniques rather than preventive techniques. (p. 10-11)

Recommendations:

1) Develop a continuum of development for literacy and math that utilizes grade level expectations as benchmarks but facilitates continuous progress of the child.
2) Base curriculum on the continuum of development. Therefore, emphasizing a child's strengths and prior knowledge as the starting point of the individualization process when planning instruction.

Finding 3: Many early childhood classrooms do not fully promote the development of autonomy and independence in young children because of the location of the classroom in relationship to bathrooms and outdoor areas or because of the lack of sinks and child-size drinking fountains in classrooms. (p 12-13)

Recommendations:

1) Reevaluate PreK, K and first grade early childhood classroom locations on a building by building basis.
2) Make drinking fountains, sinks, and bathroom facilities accessible to young children.

Finding 4: Currently, there exists a "wide gap" between the expected behaviors of kindergarten and first grade children as evidenced by classroom environment and teaching strategies utilized. (p. 12-13)

Recommendations:

1) Support articulation among teachers across all grade levels, administrators, and curriculum specialist regarding a continuum of development in the areas of language arts and mathematics. This continuum should reflect the understanding that physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth occur simultaneously and is gradual and progressive in nature.
2) Promote exploration by groups of teachers of multi-age and multi-year strategies that allow continuous progress education for all children.

Finding 5: Class size and adult child ratio meets TEA recommendations in prekindergarten and in kindergarten and primary grades in Chapter 1 schools. (p. 13)

Recommendation:

Consider staffing patterns which allow smaller class size in non-Chapter 1 schools in order to facilitate more interactive and individualized teaching strategies.

Finding 6: Frameworks for interdisciplinary and thematic-based curricula are in place prekindergarten through third grade. Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers express satisfaction with the flexibility. Prekindergarten - third grade teachers expressed a need for more materials related to the curriculum, especially Spanish Language Materials. Primary teachers expressed concern about their own competency regarding interdisciplinary curriculum. Primary teachers expressed concern with the pace of the interdisciplinary curriculum. (p. 16-17)

Recommendations:

1) When implementing new curriculum or teaching strategies, form small pilot programs and include an evaluation component.
2) Train teachers in child development as well as new strategies and curricula before the implementation.
3) Eliminate ridged time-lines for skill development in order to promote in-depth study and investigation.

Finding 7: Newly implemented Interdisciplinary curricula are age appropriate, developed with teacher input and based in children's literature. However, in the perception of the teachers, the primary curriculum is skill driven and tied to the textbooks. Neither the prekindergarten, kindergarten, or primary curricula lend to easy localization or cross-age implementation. (p. 17-19)

Recommendations:

1) Revise the curriculum around a developmental continuum which supports continuous progress education.
2) Provide a variety of themes that lend to localization to individual classrooms and provide intellectual integrity and relevance to children in a particular class.
3) Coordinate themes among programs and grade levels to facilitate cross grade level grouping patterns.

Finding 8: There is limited integration of motor development activities into curricula and teaching strategies. (p. 19-20)

Recommendations:

1) Create outdoor learning centers that integrate motor, cognitive, and social learning development.
2) Provide staff development regarding the correlation of physical development and academic learning.

Finding 9: Activities in the area of fine arts are generally used as enrichment activities instead of being correlated with cognitive, physical and social development activities. (p. 20-21)

Recommendations:

1) Make materials for art and music as available as textbooks.
2) Provide staff development regarding the correlation of fine arts activities into curricula and teaching strategies.

Finding 10: Multicultural education is limited across all grade levels. (p. 22-25)

Recommendations:

1) Provide staff development regarding gender and ethnic identity formation and the development of the self-concept.
2) Infuse curriculum and teaching strategies with projects and activities designed to allow young children time to explore similarities and differences in a safe classroom environment.

Finding 11: Open-ended teaching strategies that promote individual appropriateness of curriculum although present are not being utilized to their fullest potential, particularly in the primary grades. (p. 26-32)

Recommendations:

Provide staff development regarding the use of learning centers, project approach, multi-age grouping, and cooperative learning.

Finding 12: There is a high level of total group instruction across all grade levels but particularly in the primary grades. (p. 32-33)

Recommendations:

1) Implementation of continuous progress curriculum that fosters in-depth study of concepts and teaches skills when needed to complete authentic learning projects.
2) Promote articulation regarding expectations of instructional strategies and grouping patterns between principals and teachers and across grade levels.
3) Provide staff development regarding informal instructional strategies.
4) Create a teacher evaluation format that correlates with informal instructional strategies and reflects a developmentally appropriate philosophy.

Finding 13: The materials needed for authentic learning experiences are sometimes different from traditional materials. The perception of teachers is that funds are not readily accessible for these materials. (p. 33-34)

Recommendation:

Review budgeting processes and allocation of funds.

Finding 14: Adequate academic proficiency in Spanish has not been developed prior to transition into English. Therefore, children have added difficulties in performing successfully in English instruction. (p. 34-35)

Recommendation:

Review implementation of the current Bilingual/ESL policy to ensure that students have developed adequate academic proficiency in Spanish prior to transition into English instruction.

Finding 15: Only 33% of primary teachers reported having formal training in early childhood education. Twenty-eight percent of teachers reported having taught only one grade level and taught that grade level for more than five years. (p. 35-37)

Recommendations:

1) Insure that child development is a part of all staff development activities.
2) Create support networks for strategy development across all grade levels.

Finding 16: Authentic Assessment techniques are under utilized in prekindergarten through third grade. (p. 38-41)

Recommendations:

1) Develop a continuous progress format for curricula that integrates assessment techniques as benchmarks for reporting progress.
2) Eliminate numerical grades in primary grades.
3) Reallocate instructional time to provide for parent conferencing.

Finding 17: The district has established a strong foundation for parent and community involvement in the schools.

Recommendation:

Explore ways to facilitate community collaboration and articulation between Head Start, Child Care, and Child Welfare agencies.

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Chapter One

Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practice

In recent years, the field of Early Childhood Education has undergone significant transitions and as a result gained national interest. Several factors have contributed to this focus. Among these factors are an increase in the knowledge base concerning child development and how children learn, an increase in the number of children attending public school early childhood programs at earlier ages, and the changing of family structures, functions and needs (Gullo, 1992). Therefore, with the current movement towards the restructuring of elementary schools, new attention is focused on the early childhood programs offered by those schools.

In the 1980s, many elementary schools, responding to a call for higher standardized test scores, narrowed the curriculum and adopted instructional approaches that emphasized rote learning of academic skills rather than active, experiential learning in a meaningful context. As a consequence, many young children are still being taught academic skills, but are not learning to apply those skills in context and are not developing more complex thinking abilities (Bennet, 1988).

Recent calls for school reform have advocated an approach to early childhood education that is compatible with current knowledge about how young children learn and develop. In 1985, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a position statement outlining appropriate and inappropriate practice for four- and five-year-olds. This position statement was expanded in 1987 to include appropriate and inappropriate practice for the primary grades. In 1992, NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) collaborated in publishing guidelines for appropriate curriculum and assessment in early childhood programs. These documents outline an approach to the education of young children that brings together developmental research, widely accepted curriculum goals for young children, and the accumulated practical wisdom of teachers (Bowman, 1992). Since their publication, these guidelines have been examined and endorsed by the Association for Childhood Education International, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the Southern Early Childhood Association. Therefore, it has become an accepted practice to use these guidelines as a model for restructuring or rethinking early childhood education in the public school.

However, before any implementation of a developmentally appropriate program for young children can occur within a school district, there needs to be a study of the current philosophy, knowledge base, and practice used at both the district and campus level. The study reported in this paper was designed to describe these aspects of the early childhood program operated by McAllen

Independent School District. The study compares current practice in the district with the NAEYC guidelines and presents recommendations for change.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1) To assess the level of understanding and knowledge of building principals regarding

   a) the growth and development of young children, and the implications for curriculum, teaching strategies and classroom environment,
   b) how children think and learn, and
   c) developmentally appropriate practice;

2) To develop a needs assessment and recommendations for implementing developmentally appropriate practice from prekindergarten through third grade by

   a) determining the components of developmentally appropriate practice already in place, and
   b) determining the level of continuity of developmentally appropriate practice from prekindergarten through third grade.

Design and Methodology

This study is both descriptive and explanatory in nature and therefore utilizes qualitative research techniques which have become increasingly important modes of inquiry for the social service field. The nature of qualitative research is that it is conducted in natural settings (in this case the school), emphasizes the integration of literature review and observations to highlight patterns of action, and uses this interpretation to discuss issues and formulate recommendation (Marshall & Roseman 1989). Data collection methods used in this study included observation, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires, and site visitations.

This study was initiated in June of 1993. The first step was to prepare a questionnaire for teachers which would reflect the major components of developmentally appropriate practice as outline by the NAEYC guidelines (Appendix A). These questionnaires were distributed to all teachers in prekindergarten through third grade during September of 1993. Principals were also given a questionnaire designed to gather demographic information about their campus and information concerning special services and parent involvement activities taking place on their campuses (Appendix B).

Beginning in October of 1993, the researcher scheduled a full day visit to each of the eighteen elementary school campuses. The visits routinely included an interview with the principal, grade level meetings with teachers (prekindergarten through third grade), and classroom observations

(prekindergarten through third grade). At various campuses the nurse, reading recovery teacher, counselor or other specialists were also interviewed. Dates for site visitations and specific activities conducted at each campus are listed in Appendix C. In addition to site visitations, interviews and questionnaires, curriculum documents, report cards, and information regarding standardized test scores and retention rates were studied by the researcher.

A standard set of questions relating to classroom practice, retention, curricula, and parent involvement was prepared to be the foundation of the principal's interview used during the site visitation (Appendix D). In addition, prior to each campus visit, all teacher questionnaires from that campus were reviewed and information from that review was used to formulate specific questions for the grade level meetings and principal interview. Grade level discussions were conducted in such a way as to reach a consensus of opinion about the topic being discussed. However, strong opposition to the consensus opinion was noted. Following each site visit, notes from interviews and observations were recorded. At the completion of all site visits, these notes were analyzed and compared to determine common themes and issues.

These notes, along with information gathered from teacher's and principal's questionnaires and from reviewing documents and interviewing district personnel, form the database for this report. In reporting opinions of teachers, the term "most" refers to more than 60% of teachers, "many" refers to 30 to 60%, and the term "few" refers to the fact that less than 30% agreed with a particular idea or shared a particular feeling. Therefore, what is reported in this paper represents "strong impressions" of opinions and feelings of the school district personnel interviewed.

Organization of Report

This report is organized to correlate with the major components outlined by the NAEYC guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987). It is interesting to note that the *Executive Summary* from the *Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* (Texas Education Agency, 93) uses the same components to give recommendations regarding the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice in the public schools of Texas.

Chapter One of this report presents the goals and objectives of the study and the design and methodology used to collect and analyze data. In addition, Chapter One defines "developmentally appropriate practice", presents the theoretical and research base for this approach to early childhood education, and outlines the principles of human development underlying this approach.

In Chapters Two through Five the major components of appropriate practice will be discussed by first presenting the research base relevant to the component, presenting the data gathered specific to MISD in regards to this component and then discussing the implications regarding current practice.

Chapter Two will discuss the organizational pattern of early childhood programs, present the current philosophy, and discuss impressions of the principals' understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practice. Chapter Three will present information regarding curriculum. Chapter Four will discuss teaching strategies and Chapter Five will focus on assessment, reporting to parents, and parent and community involvement in the schools. Chapter Six, presents a summary and recommendations.

Overview of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Early childhood is defined chronologically as those ages between birth and eight years (Bredekamp, 1987). The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education defines early childhood education programs as those serving children in the early care, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels (Texas Education Agency, 1993). According to current developmental theory, these are the years children show the greatest dependency on others and also have the greatest capacity for mental development. This age group corresponds to the Piagetian stages of sensorimotor and preoperational thinking. In these stages of growth and development, the mental structures (ways of thinking and figuring out the world) are recognized as being uniquely different from those ages beyond the eighth year (Piaget, 1952). Therefore, the maturation and integration of particular brain functions during the early childhood years make it possible for children to learn things at age seven or eight that were not possible at age five.

The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education defines developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education programs as programs that

- focus on the principles and stages of child development;
- foster individual interests and understanding;
- recognize the social nature of learning; and
- value culture and linguistic diversity.

(Texas Education Agency, 1993).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is neither a curriculum nor is it a rigid set of standards that dictate practice. It is, however, a framework, a philosophy, an approach to working with young children that requires adults to pay close attention to

1) what we know about how children learn and develop, and
2) what we learn about the individual child within the group (Bredekamp, 1987).

Therefore, when we talk about DAP, we are talking about a match between how a child learns—the particular mental processes available to the child—and the strategies employed to facilitate further development of those mental structures regarding specific content. An essential element of DAP is

individual appropriateness. Therefore, flexibility in curricula and strategies is necessary since practices must be adaptable to individual appropriateness (Bowman, 1992). Even though the developmentally appropriate philosophy does not prescribe a set curriculum, it does specify what young children should or should not be learning at any given time and it does begin to outline strategies for instruction. This time-line and these strategies are based upon our current knowledge of what mental structures children have available to them and how these mental structures change over time with experience.

Theoretical Framework

Early childhood educators and proponents of DAP view learning as a developmental, interactive process. Learning occurs in children's minds as a result of an interaction—an interaction between thought and experience, an interaction with a physical object, an interaction between a child and an adult, or an interaction between children and their peers (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, Eds., 1992). DAP is based on the belief that the nature of learning should inform the practice of teaching. The work and research of Piaget (1952), Vygotsky (1978), and Eric Erickson (1963) form the foundation of this relationship between theory and practice. The principles outlined in DAP have historical roots that include Dewey's progressive education and the open education movement of the 1960s. Although the principles are similar to those movements, DAP does not advocate a return to the past, but rather to build on previous experience and reflect the knowledge acquired in the interim.

Components of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

In 1985, the NAEYC published a position statement outlining appropriate and inappropriate practices for four- and five-year-olds. In 1987, NAEYC expanded this position statement to include appropriate and inappropriate practice for the primary grades. Six major components of appropriate practice are outlined. These components include curriculum, teaching strategies, guidance and motivation, assessment, parent-teacher relations, and staff qualifications. In outlining their position on reforming elementary and early childhood programs in Texas, the task force included all of these components and also added philosophy and organization.

Principles of Child Development and Learning

The guidelines developed by NAEYC regarding the implementation of DAP are based on principles of child development formulated from the theories, and the research which grounds the theories, of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erickson. These principles can be summarized as follows:

1) All dimensions of learning (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive) are integrated. Development in one dimension affects development and learning in all other dimensions. Therefore the relevant principle of instruction is that teachers of young children should always be cognizant of the "whole child."

2) Young children view the world as a whole and are active in trying to figure out that world. They do not have a need for, nor do they understand, discrete subject or discipline areas. The relevant principle of instruction is that throughout the preschool and primary grades the curriculum should be integrated .

3) Physiologically and emotionally healthy children are internally driven to figure out their world. Young children construct their own knowledge through interaction with objects and people in the environment. The relevant principle of practice for preschool and primary age children is that they should be engaged in active rather than passive activities.

4) Young children construct knowledge by interaction with real objects and people in an environment and go through "one layer after another of being wrong". Therefore, the relevant principle of practice for preschool and primary-age children is that the curricula provide developmentally appropriate materials for children to explore and think about and opportunities for interaction and communication with other children and adults. Also, the content of the curriculum must be relevant, engaging, and meaningful to the children themselves.

5) Young children learn in the presence of their peers through interaction and observation. The relevant principle of practice is that teachers recognize the importance of developing positive peer group relationships and provide opportunities and support for cooperative small group projects that not only develop cognitive ability, but also promote peer interaction.

6) Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation. Knowledge of age appropriate expectations is one dimension of developmentally appropriate practice, but equally important is the knowledge of what is individually appropriate for specific children in a classroom. Although universal and predictable sequences of human development appear to exist, a major premise of DAP is that each child is unique and has an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background. The relevant principle of practice is that teachers of preschool and primary age children recognize the need to individualize instruction for all children in the classroom.

7) Young children use a different set of mental operations to figure out their world and solve problems (i.e. "they just think differently"). The relevant principle of practice here is that the younger the children and the more diverse their backgrounds, the wider the variety of teaching methods and materials required.

The above principles of human development and learning will be referred to when analyzing data gathered from this study regarding the use of developmentally appropriate practice in the McAllen Independent School District.

Chapter Two

Philosophy and Organization

The McAllen ISD philosophy of Early Childhood Education as articulated in the Kindergarten and Prekindergarten Curriculum overview reads as follows.

> *Early childhood (Pre K-3) is a period of rapid mental growth and development. Maturation is an important factor that determines the level of development for a child. Children seek out the stimuli they need to nourish these developing mental abilities. Children in this three to eight year age range acquire knowledge in ways that are significantly different from the ways in which older children learn. This acquisition is based on experiences, perceptions and direct multisensory interactions. Learning activities and materials for these young children should be real, relevant and concrete with a gradual progression to the abstract. These activities should be active rather than passive. Children should learn by doing.*
>
> *Instruction in Early Childhood programs must then be child-centered, individualized and age appropriate across the grade levels. This program should be thematic based with an interdisciplinary approach. Such an approach will maximize the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of the individual child. In addition, student performance should be assessed with a variety of developmentally appropriate techniques. A portfolio containing samples of a student's performance and evidence of the student's progress will be kept to assist in communicating with parents and in planning subsequent learning opportunities.*
>
> *Parents make important contributions to student's learning both in and out of the classroom. Therefore, it is necessary that the Early Childhood program include a strong parental involvement component which identifies specific activities for parents.*
> *In McAllen ISD we believe that each child is a special human being with cultural, linguistic and instructional needs which must be addressed. Understanding and meeting these needs is of utmost importance. Early childhood instruction must then include challenging activities, strategies and experiences which are sensitive to the special needs of this unique individual.*
> (McAllen ISD, Teaching Learning Connections, 1993)

This philosophy embodies the essence of what is meant by developmentally appropriate practice, the matching of curriculum and teaching strategies to each child's developmental need. In order to operationalize this philosophy, administrators, teachers and support staff must understand both the nature of child development and mental growth and the continuum of the development of language, literacy, mathematical, social and physical skills.

School principals have the leadership role in developing the "unwritten" philosophy that influences how any one school operates. Teacher's own beliefs are, of course, a vital component of their practice, but their actions are greatly influenced by what they perceive to be their principal's beliefs about what children should be learning, how children should be learning, and what behaviors are expected in and out of the classroom.

Personal philosophies are influenced by experience and education. In reviewing the personnel forms supplied by each principal, it is interesting to note that seven principals had some experience teaching prekindergarten or kindergarten. This experience ranged from 1 to 10 years. Six additional principals have had teaching experience in the first, second or third grade. This experience ranged from 1 to 17 years. However, only 3 principals had an early childhood or kindergarten endorsement. Five principals have had no experience teaching in the early childhood years. Nine facilitators reported teaching experience with prekindergarten or kindergarten and 3 more reported teaching experience with the primary grades. Seven facilitators hold an early childhood or kindergarten endorsement. (Appendices E and F summarize this information.)

David Elkind (1989) outlined four components of the philosophy that supports DAP. These components are (1) conception of the learning process, (2) conception of the learner, (3) conception of knowledge, and (4) aims of education. Principals were interviewed during site visitations. These interviews focused on the general operation of the early childhood programs in their building, the principal's conception of how literacy and mathematics were learned by young children, and on the four components listed above. Principals were also asked to outline the strengths and discuss their concerns about the early childhood programs in their schools and describe the role of play in a kindergarten classroom and in a second grade classroom.

The results of the interviews showed that most principals have general knowledge about appropriate practice and procedure in early childhood classrooms, but sometimes feel they lack the ability or power to change a particular practice in a particular classroom or classrooms. For example, many principals articulated the importance of active learning and concrete materials and experiences but expressed concern about the amount of abstract and paper-pencil tasks young children are being asked to do. Another example of general knowledge was the fact that most principals expressed a desire to stop the practice of retention but most didn't outline goals that included the strategies research has shown effective against retention. Many principals had general knowledge about development but did not articulate enough specific knowledge to be able to explain why the idea of DAP was being considered a good alternative to current practice. Throughout all interviews, the commitment and interest in early childhood education on the part of the principals was apparent.

Based upon the principal's prior experience and training in the field of early childhood, interviews conducted during the site visit, and a focus group

meeting held in October, the following topics were identified as needs for further study and discussion by the principals during focus groups.

I. The Constructivist Theory of Learning
II. Continuous Progress Education
III. Emergent Literacy and The Whole Language Philosophy
IV. Social Emotional Development in Early Childhood
V. The Role of Play in Development and Learning
VI. Evaluation of Early Childhood Learning Environments and Teaching Strategies

Organization

The McAllen Independent School District (MISD), located in South Texas along the Mexican border, has an enrollment of 21,703 students. The Limited English Population(LEP) is 9268 or 42.7% and the economically handicapped population is 13,431 or 62.1%. The dropout rate in 1992-93 was 6.1 %.

There are three main high schools, six middle schools and 18 elementary schools. The elementary school population is 11,041. The early childhood programs at MISD are held within the eighteen elementary schools. Children are organized by grade levels. The half-day prekindergarten program serves children who qualify as Limited English Proficient or whose families qualify for free or reduced lunch. Kindergarten through third grade classes serve all children within district boundaries. Children are grouped by grade levels, initially by chronological age. Grouping is static in that children are assigned to one teacher for one year. There are only a few situations of organized team teaching. At the present time, there is no departmentalization within the early childhood grades. Special populations served in self-contained classes include special education, English Language Development (ELD) and Discovery classes for children who have been determined to have high potential for being gifted or talented. On campuses which house special education classes, some inclusion activities do occur.

Within each building, classrooms are grouped by grade level and teachers meet regularly in grade level meetings for planning. At the present time, curriculum goals are determined by grade level expectations rather than by use of a developmental continuum of learning in the different domains. Expectations, and therefore activities within classrooms of the same grade level, are similar. Physical education and lunch are also scheduled by grade levels.

In general, most teachers in this district demonstrate a strong orientation towards grade level expectations. Teachers, particularly primary teachers, talked frequently about "keeping children at grade level" or "getting children to grade level". Teachers also frequently talked about a child "not being ready." When asked for further explanation, teachers gave the example of a particular child not having the skill or skills needed to do the work expected "at this grade level".

Grade level expectations are important for teachers and parents. They serve as "benchmarks"—a way of understanding the progress of any one child in relationship to the "norm". However, grade level expectations are just one reference point for marking a child's progress and developing an educational plan. A strong orientation towards grade level expectations can interfere with a child's development in several ways. First, it can mask the progress that the child is making. A child may not be working "up to grade level", but he/she may be making genuine gains along the developmental continuum towards literacy, mathematics, physical, or social development. Therefore, a high orientation toward grade level expectations may focus attention on what the child is not doing and not what the child is doing, and therefore the reinforcement the child needs to maintain his/her motivation may be diminished. Second, when attention is placed on where a child is not, instead of where he/she is, appropriate instructional strategies may be overlooked. Third, when there are children capable of going beyond grade level expectations in a classroom and the focus of the curriculum and teaching strategies is on maintaining grade level performance, not on the developmental progress towards optimal literacy, math, social or physical development, children miss the opportunities for extension and expansion and in-depth understanding of a rich and intellectually rigorous content. They also may become bored with classroom activities and bored with school in general because it is not meeting their intellectual needs. Developmentally appropriate classrooms are classrooms in which there is a balance between age level (grade level) expectations and individual (developmental) expectations. This balance will provide appropriate learning opportunities for all children.

A basic premise of developmentally appropriate practice is that children learn in social situations particularly from children that are somewhat advanced in any area. When buildings and schedules are organized around chronological age, opportunities for different age groups to share activities and learn from each other are limited. This arrangement also limits teachers from understanding the needs of children and the needs of teachers in other grade levels. The recommendation is not for the immediate organization of multi-age classrooms because there is not yet a general understanding among teachers of how or why to organize in multi-age groups. The recommendation is for every building to look at simple designs to informally begin mixing two or three grade levels together for different activities. In this way, teachers, administrators and parents can become comfortable with the idea and begin to experience first hand the advantages of mixed-aged groupings for all children. The second recommendation is to restructure the curriculum to focus on a developmental continuum towards goals in literacy, mathematics, physical, and social development that uses current grade level expectations as benchmarks, not as limitations to what should be or can be accomplished by any one child in any one year.

Learning Environment

During the site visitation phase of this study, 75% of the early childhood classrooms were observed for 10 to 15 minutes. The purpose of these observations was not to evaluate teaching strategies or abilities, but to understand the classroom environment, facilities, and learning materials available to children on a regular basis. Prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms were generally informal in their organization. That is, children sat at tables or on the rug area surrounded by learning centers. This arrangement facilitated movement, social interaction and conversation. All prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms displayed both an art center with a painting easel and a dramatic play center and there was generally evidence of recent use of both. Less than 25% of the prekindergarten or kindergarten classrooms displayed musical instruments, a sandbox, water table, or big building blocks. The use of these materials are very important for the development of mathematical knowledge, language, and social skills.

One of the major goals of early childhood education is the integration of physical, social, and cognitive skills. In only three buildings did prekindergarten and kindergarten children have easy access to an outdoor play area designed for young children, and in these buildings no wheel toys were available. Another goal for early childhood is the development of independence and autonomy. Less than half of the prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, and third grade classrooms have sinks. Running water is important not only in helping young children learn to take care of their own hygiene needs, but also to facilitate art and cooking activities necessary to the early childhood curriculum. In two buildings, the prekindergarten classrooms were located "far" from the bathrooms, thus limiting children's independence in taking care of their own needs. It is very important that the physical facilities in a classroom, the location of the classroom, and the equipment available to the children facilitate developmental growth and learning.

In all buildings, first grade classrooms look and feel very different than kindergarten and prekindergarten classrooms. Few first grade classrooms were organized around centers with art and dramatic play areas. There were no sand boxes, water tables or blocks in the first grade rooms visited. There was little evidence of daily art activities. There was much more formality in seating and in the general atmosphere of classroom conduct. In fact, first grade classrooms look and feel much more like third grade or even fifth grade classrooms than kindergarten, and yet the children are only one year older. As children develop their cognitive, social and physical skills, their high need for movement, social interaction and, frequent and spontaneous play does decrease, but this change is gradual and extends through the first grade and into the second and even, for some children, into the third grade. Classroom arrangements, behavioral expectations, and teaching strategies should reflect the change in development that occurs throughout early childhood. This change is gradual—much more gradual than the the physical environments would imply.

There is also a big gap between the expected behaviors of kindergarten children and first grade children. In grade level meetings, prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers generally focused on developmental needs and issues when discussing curriculum and teaching strategies. First grade teachers generally focused on grade level expectations and lack of readiness to perform certain skills. Early childhood education is considered prekindergarten through third grade because children in this age range are developing mental structures that will lead to adult like logic and thinking. It is important that children experience a continuous increase in academic expectations as they move through the grades. First grade children still need many of the same informal and play oriented teaching strategy generally available to kindergarten children. Kindergarten and first grade teachers need more opportunities to work and plan together to build a continuous progress curriculum.

Class size

Curriculum and teaching strategies in developmentally appropriate classrooms provide children with the opportunity to learn from hands-on experiences through social interaction. Because of the active and interactive nature of appropriate classrooms, adult-to-child ratio becomes important. In the Chapter One schools, the adult/child ratio in kindergarten through third grade is 1 to 17. In the other schools the ratio is generally 1 to 22. All prekindergarten classrooms have one paraprofessional, as well as one teacher. The adult-to-child ratio in prekindergarten is, on the average, 1-12.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990) in accordance with recent research on class size, has recommended the following adult/child ratios and maximum class size:

- for 3, 4, 5 year-olds: 2 adults to 20 children, with a class size of 20
- for 6,7,8, year olds: 1 adult to 15 children, with a class size of 20
- for at-risk children: 1 adult to 15 children, with a class size of 15
  (NAESP, 1990, pp. 9-10).

Recent Texas legislation requires all early childhood programs, including public school prekindergarten and kindergartens, to, by the fall of 1994, meet the requirements outlined in *Minimum Standards for Day-care Centers* (1985) published by the Texas Department of Human Services. The adult to child ratio outlined by this document is 1 adult to 15 children for four year olds, and 1 adult to 18 children for 5 year olds. When making adjustments to meet recommended adult/child ratios, it is important to consider limiting class size in first and second grade also. Development is a gradual process and active and interactive teaching strategies are needed by all children in early childhood programs.

Chapter Three

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

Based upon the principles of human development, appropriate curricula for early childhood programs is integrated across all disciplines, provides for learning and development opportunities in all domains, is flexible, and fits the rate and learning style of each child. Furthermore, appropriate curricula is personally meaningful to each child and provides for in-depth learning. It provides a balance between content and process and acknowledges that children are active learners and arrive at school with knowledge and skills learned from families and communities.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum is often referred to as child-centered. This does not mean that it is dictated by children, but that it is based on the needs of children according to their stage of development. For example, the growth rate of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children is rapid and therefore these children require many opportunities to coordinate the use of newly developing large and small muscles. An appropriate early childhood curriculum reflects this need by designing activities which integrate curriculum areas and creates opportunities for the simultaneous development of social, cognitive and motor skills.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum provides for a balance of content (what is taught) and process (how children come to know). One dichotomy often created concerning early childhood programs is whether or not these programs should be oriented towards academics or towards social-emotional development. Using the principles of human development to define appropriate curricula and teaching strategies, it becomes evident that the academic learning goals can be presented in such a way that they meet the physical and social learning needs of young children. In fact, children construct their understanding of concepts by going through layer after layer of "being wrong" and therefore need rich and meaningful content in order to practice skills and construct knowledge. Developmentally appropriate programs do not need to choose between content and process, but do need to strike a balance. Appropriate curricula supports children in learning knowledge, skills, and the dispositions, and to use them to continue learning throughout their lives. Since the rate of development varies among children, it is important that this balance is provided from prekindergarten through the third grade. An appropriate curriculum in early childhood is one which allows continuous progress and a balance of content and process.

Curriculum in McAllen Early Childhood Programs

Curriculum in the early childhood program at MISD comes from several sources, all driven by the learner outcomes formulated by the Texas Education Agency. This study focused on two major sources of curricula, the Teaching Learning Connection (TLC), which outlines curriculum for the prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, and the interdisciplinary curriculum which is in its

pilot phase in the primary grades. Characteristics of developmentally appropriate curriculum will be discussed in view of these curricula. Strengths of each curriculum will be noted as well as concerns. Additional discussion will be be presented regarding the role of motor development, fine arts, math, and multicultural education in the district's curriculum. Information from teacher questionnaires, observations, notes from principal interviews and grade level meetings, and review of the documents was used to formulate the impressions reported.

McAllen Independent School District implemented an integrated curriculum in kindergarten and prekindergarten during the fall of 1992. The Teaching Learning Connection is a sequentially developed guide organized around themes common to early childhood. Each theme is organized around guiding questions and is presented in a framework of suggested activities flowing into weekly units. The curriculum was created by a committee composed mainly of teachers, and is updated regularly by this committee using feedback from all teachers in the district.

During grade level meetings, most prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers expressed satisfaction with the TLC. These kindergarten teachers were pleased to have a framework from which to work, felt that it is flexible and allows them freedom to adapt to their own classroom needs, and appreciated the organizational system. Although there was strong support for the curriculum, many teachers interviewed expressed concern regarding the lack of the literature books and the lack of music materials referred to in the guides. All teachers in the bilingual program expressed a need for materials and literature in Spanish. Several schools have English/Spanish kindergartens. Teachers of these programs expressed frustration over the lack of continuity between the English TLC and the Spanish TLC, particularly regarding the sequence of the phonetic component. Because Spanish and English words for the same concept do not always start with the same letter or sound, the phonetic skill assigned to specific units are different, making it difficult to teach both groups collaboratively.

Teachers in the primary grades experienced at least two major curricula changes this fall; a new reading adoption which was a literature-based series emphasizing the whole language philosophy, and an interdisciplinary curriculum which organizes language arts, social science, health, fine arts, and science around the literature in the new reading series. Most teachers reported having little training in either whole language or interdisciplinary curriculum and were very concerned about whether or not they "were doing it correctly." They also expressed concern about the pace of the curriculum. They felt that they were "going so fast that they were not being able to cover anything in depth".

Table 1
Use of Thematic and Interdisciplinary Curriculum
by Percent

	Thematic Instruction	Interdisciplinary Curriculum
Prekindergarten	100	100
Kindergarten	100	100
First Grade	83	91
Second Grade	78	92
Third Grade	75	91

Table 1 shows the percentage of classrooms, by grade level, using thematic and interdisciplinary teaching strategies. This is the pilot year for the interdisciplinary curriculum in the primary grades and 91% of the teachers chose to participate. It is interesting to note that prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers see their curriculum as both thematic and interdisciplinary while some primary teachers list their involvement in interdisciplinary teaching, but don't list involvement in thematic teaching. When asked about this during grade level meetings, most of the teachers who reported a difference stated that because the interdisciplinary units were designed around a specific literature text, they were not considered thematic.

As stated earlier, approximately 91% of the first, second, and third grade teachers chose to pilot the new interdisciplinary curriculum. This commitment required teachers not to make any changes in the curriculum, but to teach it as it was proposed. After the units had been taught, the teachers could give feedback for revision for next year. Because a great number of classrooms are piloting the same curriculum design, at the end of this pilot year all the information will be pertinent only to that design. Furthermore, since the majority of the teachers have not been trained, results will not give a clear picture of the effectiveness of this design. A more efficient way to pilot a program is to have several models, implement them in samples of 10 to 15 % of the total population, and thoroughly train the entire staff before the implementation phase. Then, at the end of the pilot year, the different models could be compared to each other and to the original curriculum format to determine the most effective.

The success and anxiety level concerning the implementation of the interdisciplinary curriculum corresponded to the teacher's participation in creating the curriculum. Teachers who were on the planning committee were more comfortable and had a better understanding of what they were to do and why they were to do it. This was also true within grade levels within schools. For example, if someone in a particular grade level at a particular school had been involved in the planning, that person took an unofficial role as leader of

the implementation at that school. There was a noticeable difference in comfort and implementation level between schools having a representative on the planning committee and schools that did not. This may be explained in part, by the additional training the committee member received, and in part by the feeling of ownership and responsibility to "make it work". This points out the need to involve at least one member of each grade level from each school in the creation of new curricula. This does create bigger committees, and does require a greater commitment of resources; but doing so will insure more effective implementation.

In grade level meetings, primary teachers across the district expressed concern about the new literature-based reading program. Their concern centered on the difference between the philosophy of the former on-level reading program and the philosophy of the whole language approach. The basic differences in these two philosophies is in the time-line for skill development and in the expectations for the rate of development of each child. In the former approach, skills were taught sequentially before students attempted new material and the sequence of these skills were determined by grade level. Therefore, all students in a certain grade were expected to learn all of the skills assigned to that grade. In the whole language approach, to put it very simplisticly, skills are taught when an individual student needs the skill to accomplish an authentic reading task. In the whole language philosophy, a child's prior knowledge and experience in reading and writing and his/her personal interest and motivation toward reading are the main criteria for planning daily instruction. Most teachers were confused by the conflict in the philosophy and lacked the training necessary to put whole language strategies into practice. This points out the need to move slowly into any curriculum or strategy innovation and design staff development first around how children learn, why change is needed, and what kind of change is needed. Then, teachers will be ready to begin to develop new strategies. Research shows that successful innovations require a change in philosophy as well as strategy and take from 5 to 7 years to complete.

In reviewing the interdisciplinary curricula for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and the primary grades and comparing them to the curriculum guidelines developed by NAEYC, several areas of strength can be noted. The curricula have been created by teachers and are consistently being revised through teacher feedback. The curricula are age-appropriate and they reflect themes that are personally relevant to children. There is, in the case of the prekindergarten and kindergarten curricula, a balance of content and process. However, the primary curriculum, although organized in an interdisciplinary approach, is bound to textbooks (at least in the minds of teachers), skill-based, and driven by grade level expectations instead of following a continuum based on the the development of literacy. The greatest strength of all three curricula is that they are all based in children's literature, and therefore provide a strong basis for the development of language and literacy.

All three interdisciplinary curricula are new and in the process of development and revision. There are several areas of concern that should be considered as they are revised.

1) There needs to be more options for teachers to localize themes to fit the specific needs and interests of their classrooms. The curriculum needs to be organized in such a way that children can contribute to, and take ownership of, the content and the way it is presented in the classroom. Pre-assessment of children's understanding of an intended theme should occur in every classroom and that information should inform the planning and the direction of study in that classroom. At the present time, themes and units are predetermined by a committee and given a time-line for completion. The district should provide a continuum of development in all domains, complete with grade-level benchmarks, and should provide ideas, suggestions, training and resources. However, DAP requires matching curricula and strategies to individual needs. Given the amount of diversity among students within any classroom and across the district, predetermined themes and time-lines, even when they are presented as guidelines, can actually limit in-depth study and the development of motivation for life-long learning. For example, kindergarten and prekindergarten time-lines make it necessary for all classrooms in all buildings to be doing virtually the same thing on the same day. When you think of the concept of individual appropriateness, it is hard to imagine that all kindergarten children in McAllen are in need of the same instruction, in the same way, on the same day.

2) Developmentally appropriate curricula calls for an in-depth study of concepts and for intellectual rigor. The themes presented in the prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculum are generally broad based and provide opportunities for intellectual rigor, but the units regress into skill-based instruction. Young children are intrinsically motivated to learn about the world around them. They need many opportunities to investigate this world. It is important to remember that even the youngest children are capable of profound intellectual thought and this ability must always be fostered.

3) Because there is no coordination of themes across grade levels, collaboration between grade levels becomes very difficult. If there were connections between the themes studied in any grade level, then there would be possibilities for multi-age instruction or cross-grade level collaboration through projects that involve children from different grades. Creating themes that encourage cross-grade level participation and accelerating learning by picking topics that are of value, personally relevant, and are intellectually

stimulating to children, would create a system which promotes continuous progress for all children.

4) At the present, curriculum guidelines are presented in a structured time-line. Therefore, the pace is dictated by the document not by the individual teacher or the needs of the students in his/her class. In grade level meetings, most teachers referred to the need to be at a certain place on a certain date. Therefore, even though the document is intended as a guide, most teachers perceive it as a mandate and focus on "covering the material" rather than providing the time for in-depth understanding of the concept studied. Activities suggested in the units are generally activities that can be completed in one class period. These activities do not lend themselves to long-term investigations or explorations. Even the youngest children are very curious and will learn more when presented a topic in depth with time to explore and construct the concepts involved.

It is also important to consider the role of psychomotor development, the fine arts, mathematics, and multicultural education in the implementation of interdisciplinary curricula. Each of these disciplines can add context, depth, and intellectual integrity to the curricula. These contributions will now be discussed.

Motor Development

Psychomotor development contributes to a child's overall well-being. The goals of physical development programs for young children include the participation in a variety of activities that foster social development, the development of a positive self-image, the development of gross and fine motor skills, and the development of a positive attitude and disposition to continue to participate in physical activities. These goals, like goals in other areas of the curriculum, are broad and can best be met by a balance of planned and spontaneous activities. Activities designed for specialized skill development, like those found in the organized physical education periods, should never overshadow, replace, or serve as the primary source of general physical education (Gallahue, 1981).

Four and five-year-olds are growing rapidly and developing muscle tone. They need frequent rigorous activity which involves balance and coordination skills. The development of physical stamina and coordination also strengthens the child's autonomy and self-concept.

During the primary years, children's physical growth tends to slow down, and even though they gain greater control over their bodies and are able to sit and attend for longer periods of time. They are more fatigued by these long periods of sitting than by running, jumping or bicycling. Children in the primary grades need frequent periods of activity in order to maintain concentration. Most teachers recognize this need for movement by providing a classroom

structure that allows for movement and breaks up long time periods with in-class exercise. However, attention to physical development should be incorporated into the interdisciplinary curriculum, thus combining content and process goals.

While kindergarten and primary children do have a daily 45 minute class with the physical education specialist, prekindergarten children do not. There are, however, physical education goals in the prekindergarten curriculum. Many prekindergarten teachers report that outside play is not regularly scheduled. It is something that occurs "when there is time". One barrier to outside play is the element of time as exemplified by one teacher's comment, "The curriculum is so full already. We just don't always have time to go outside and play." Another common barrier reported by teachers is the lack of easy access to equipment and play apparatus. Four- and five-year-olds need frequent use of a climbing apparatus, and many, depending upon their prior experience, need the opportunity to use wheel toys to develop coordination skills.

Structured physical eduction classes are scheduled to correspond with the teacher's planning period. In most schools, each grade level has PE at the same time to facilitate grade-level planning. In one school, kindergarten PE is at 8:00 a.m., leaving the rest of the day as classroom time. In another school, kindergarten PE is the last period of the day. Outside play is sometimes given to classrooms as a reward in the form of recess. However, recess is not a regularly scheduled event in any school. In many schools, lunch time recess is not even feasible, partly because of lack of supervision and partly because of lack of equipment to occupy the children in safe and productive ways. Research does support the positive impact of recess on social and cognitive competence (Pellegrini & Smith, 93; Block, 1987).

Recess is a major benefit to young children, but a more important issue is developing ways to integrate physical activities, particularly large motor and outdoor activities, into the interdisciplinary curriculum. Some ideas for integration include incorporating gardening projects, neighborhood walks, outdoor dramatic play, organized games, or community projects that create authentic ways of learning and the assessment of that learning. Outdoor learning activities stimulate the development of imagination, problem solving and social skills, as well motor development, and should not be overlooked or seen as secondary to traditional classroom teaching strategies.

Fine Arts Education

The fine arts are important in early childhood programs because they encourage self-expression and imagination, and because it is through creative experiences that children reveal what they know and how they think. Children also learn problem solving strategies as they create ways of moving or ways of representing what they have observed (Lasky and Mukerji, 1980). The creative arts also provide opportunities for helping children learn content from the sciences, social studies, and other subject matter areas. In a position statement

supporting every child's right to involvement in the expressive arts, prepared for the Association for Childhood Education International, Jalongo (1990) notes these benefits:

- The expressive arts fosters "learning from the inside out," authentic learning that changes behavior and encourages reflection.
- The expressive arts enhances the child's ability to interpret symbols.
- The expressive arts are associated with growth in all areas of development, including academics.
- The expressive arts regard the child as a meaning maker and constructor, a discoverer and embodiment of knowledge rather than a passive recipient of someone else's ready-made answers (p.196).

The fine arts, although always included in curriculum documents, are seen by many teachers as "activities to do for enrichment" or for "when there is time left over". Teachers do not always articulate a direct connection between fine arts and skill development. Primary teachers, in particular, feel that their first priority is teaching the skills necessary to meet grade level expectations.

Another barrier to the integration of the fine arts into the curriculum is the fact that most teachers (over 60%) don't feel they possess knowledge, skills, or talent in this area, and therefore spend little energy coordinating skill development with fine arts activities. As one third grade teacher explained it, "It is much easier to just stick with the basics."

Music and art specialists are not available below third grade and yet music, drama and art are vital components of early childhood education because they foster development across all domains. As with physical education, the fine arts provide rich and intellectually stimulating ways to integrate learning and individualize it at the same time. Interest in learning more about these strategies was expressed by many teachers through the questionnaires and through grade level discussions.

Math Education

For young children mathematics is a way of viewing the world and their experience in it. It is a way of solving real problems. It is an understanding of numbers, operations on numbers, functions and relations, probability and measurement. As children grow and develop, their mathematical activities change. In the Piagetian framework, mathematics is the kind of learning that requires the learner to create relationships as he/she manipulates objects (Piaget, 1970; Kamii and DeClark, 1985; DeVries and Kohlberg, 1987). It follows that each individual must construct his/her own understanding of mathematics. What one individual knows about mathematics cannot be transmitted directly to another individual. The youngest children explore, begin to group and sort objects, and make comparisons. After that initial time spent exploring, children may be ready to label their mathematical thinking with numerals and record their discoveries using mathematical symbols.

Mathematics should continue throughout the early years as a manipulative activity.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 1989) calls for curriculum that provides students with opportunities to construct their concept of mathematics across all grade levels. Mathematics in the prekindergarten and kindergarten programs should not be scheduled for a specific period of instruction, but should be an integral part of the child's day. In the primary grades, math should be integrated into themes as much as possible, but if the theme is not appropriate for meaningful mathematics, then a math period can be scheduled. Math instruction should also be part of a child's play time.

Each individual's understanding of number is a combination of prior experience and mental development. Some children come to school with highly evolved number understanding, many do not. Because the rate of learning is different for all children, it would be expected that not all children are ready for the same activities at the same time. Observations as to how children are dealing with objects and number relationships is how teachers should assess the needs of each child.

Mathematics instruction in early childhood classrooms should be individualized. Direct instruction, when appropriate, should be done only in small groups with the use of concrete objects. Worksheets should be used only after a child has demonstrated his/her understanding of the abstract nature of using numerals. The Math Their Way curriculum is a continuous progress approach focusing on the use of concrete objects through authentic problem solving situations. To be most effective, this program should be used by teachers across grade levels, prekindergarten through at least second grade. Many schools have one or two teachers that are trained in this program. Again, this approach is effective, but to maximize the effectiveness it needs to be continuous across the early childhood years.

Multicultural Curriculum

Many adults assume that children are unaffected by the biases in U.S. society. What we know about children's identity and attitude development challenges these assumptions. Research shows that by age two, children begin to construct their gender and racial identity and their physical self-concept (Katz, 1982; Honig, 1983). Their developing attitudes toward themselves and others are reflections of the attitudes in their homes, schools, and communities. Young children often exhibit preprejudice—erroneous beliefs and fears about others. Although these preprejudice ideas result mainly from the different ways young children think about their world, many times they mirror adult bias and may lead to prejudice unless adults intervene.

Research reveals that (1) children begin to notice differences and construct classificatory and evaluative categories very early, (2) there are overlapping but distinguishable developmental tasks and steps in the construction of identity and attitudes, and (3) societal stereotyping and bias

influence children's self-concept and attitudes toward others (Derman-Sparks,1989). Multicultural and anti-bias curriculum goals enable every child to construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity; to develop comfortable, empathetic and just interaction with diversity; and to develop critical thinking and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice (Derman-Sparks, 1989).

Derman-Sparks (1993) identifies two distinct curricula prevalent in schools today; the diversity denial curriculum and tourist-multicultural curriculum. Diversity denial curriculum is characterized by

(1) No acknowledgement that diversity is valuable. The classroom environment, teaching materials, teaching styles and activities only depict one culture's behaviors and beliefs. There is a conscious or unaware teaching of stereotypes. These stereotypes can be about various racial or ethnic groups, gender roles, or family styles.
(2) A curriculum that ignores real differences among any one group.
(3) A belief that young children do not notice differences. This assumes that discussing differences with children teaches them prejudice.
(4) Expectation that all children fit one norm of child development.

A diversity denial educational approach miseducates all children. Curriculum for all children must be inclusive, one in which all children, European-American or Hispanic, as well as every other ethnic group in our country are seen, heard, respected, and prepared for living in a complex, diverse world community(Derman-Sparks, 1993).

A tourist-multicultural curriculum is a simplistic, inadequate version of multicultural education. In practice, many multicultural activities deteriorate into "visiting" other cultures (i.e. a special bulletin board, a "multicultural center", an occasional parent visit, a holiday celebration, or even a week's unit). Tourist-multicultural curriculum reinforces stereotypes by presenting pieces of culture disconnected and out of context. One example is having four, five, or six year old children reenact the traditional Thanksgiving Feast. Young children have little concept of time. Therefore, reenacting an historical event confuses children and reinforces stereotypes of Native Americans (Derman-Sparks, 1993). Teachers often justify these types of activities by stating that they are "hands-on" and children enjoy them. Young children do need concrete experiences, and dramatizations are effective strategies for learning, but the curriculum for young children needs to be focused on their immediate time and environment. Tourist-multicultural curricula do not give children the tools they need to comfortably, empathetically, and fairly interact with people who are different.

Teachers who explain a lack of diversity content in their curriculum by insisting that young children do not notice or care about differences among people seriously underestimate developmental realities. All children, including

those growing up in a racially or ethnically homogeneous community, are aware of differences among themselves including gender, physical characteristics, family styles, traditions, religious beliefs, and disabilities; and do have contact with both positive and negative images and messages about various people.

Integrating anti-bias multicultural goals into the educational program for all children is therefore relevant, reflects the needs and interests of the children, and builds upon what children already know. The key is first choosing content that enables young children to explore their own direct experience of diversity and then introducing new forms of diversity in ways that connect to children's learning about themselves and their classmates. It is equally important not to overestimate what young children can learn effectively and what they need to function in their world. Examples of overestimating include activities that attempt to teach 3- and 4-year-olds about ethnic groups before they have constructed the concept beyond their family, introducing content about countries from which their family emigrated in the far past, or expecting that a few art or music activities in one unit about culture are sufficient to foster dispositions of respect and confront diversity in the face of pervasive social bias.

Effective multicultural curricula include three dimensions, which differ in focus but build on and interact with each other. They are:

1. Fostering development within the child's home culture.
2. Bringing diversity into the classroom.
3. Counteracting bias and stereotypes.

The TLC resource guide for the prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculum list a cultural connection for each unit. More than 95% of these connections refer to holidays. Teachers in all grade levels were asked during grade level meetings to explain their concept of multicultural education. In prekindergarten and kindergarten meetings, most teachers referred to their resource guide. When asked if they did anything else, most felt there was no more time in the teaching day. When asked specifically about working with the concepts of gender and ethnic identity or bias, many teachers expressed the feeling that it wasn't necessary because the children in their room were "mainly from the same culture."

When asked the same questions about multicultural education, teachers in the primary grades responded similarly. Most teachers stated that they covered what was in the guide and that was all there was time for. Many of the teachers talked about working individually with children concerning identity and bias when they felt there was a need.

When visiting classrooms, very little multicultural materials or evidence of multicultural teaching was evident. September is National Hispanic Awareness Month, and yet in none of the schools visited during this time was there evidence of awareness of this celebration. In November, many of the classrooms visited displayed the traditional pictures of Native Americans and

Pilgrims which are stereotypical. However, one kindergarten classroom was presenting a developmentally appropriate approach to Native American studies. The teacher was emphasizing the contemporary as well as the historical aspects of the culture, and attempting to help children correct misconceptions they had about Native Americans.

Teachers do not ignore multicultural education, or present tourist-multicultral curriculum out of malice. Most teachers simply do not understand how crucial it is for young children to have information and positive experiences with diversity at the time when they are forming attitudes about their own identity and others. Multicultural education is not another subject to study. It is simply an awareness, on the part of teachers, of developing attitudes of young children. This awareness needs to be incorporated into every part of the curriculum and all teaching strategies. It is too important to ignore. Thematic units and teaching strategies need to be designed in such a way as to allow young children time to explore similarities and differences in a safe environment.

Chapter Four

Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Strategies

A strong relationship exists between curricula and teaching strategies. Developmentally appropriate teaching strategies recognize

- that all children are capable of learning but that the rate and the style of learning is individual,
- that social, cognitive and psychomotor learning occur simultaneously and learning in one domain affects learning in other domains,
- that children construct knowledge by going through many "layers of being wrong" therefore need to consistently revisit concepts in new contexts,
- that learning takes place in the presence of and through interaction with peers,
- that learning must be personally relevant to the child.

Developmentally appropriate classrooms are busy, productive, and somewhat noisy. For most of the day, children move freely between learning centers working on self-initiated projects in small groups or alone. The teacher or teachers move among the groups observing, asking questions which facilitate exploration and extension of ideas and problem solving, providing resources, and supporting self-monitoring and self-correcting activities. The classroom itself is full of evidence of involvement and active learning. There are many student made materials such as books, journals, maps, models, artwork, charts, and graphs.

Learning centers, mulit-age activities, social dramatic play, and project approach are strategies that fit all of these criteria and are identified as developmentally appropriate for young children. In the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked if they used these strategies on a daily, weekly, occasional basis (less than 4 times a year) or never. They were also given the option to say that the strategy was not appropriate for their grade level. Table 2 displays the results.

Table 2
Use of Learning Strategies
by Percent

	Pre-kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
Learning Centers	98	77	51	51	35
Multi-age Activities	17	5	9	11	5
The Project Approach	6	15	19	17	18
Socio-Dramatic Play	50	66	16	16	19

On the questionnaire, teachers were asked to list strategies, the ones mentioned or others, that they would like to use more often. The lists were tallied by grade level. Prekindergarten teachers listed journal writing and portfolios. Kindergarten teachers listed cooperative learning and journal writing. First grade teachers listed learning centers, cooperative learning, and portfolios. Second grade teachers listed learning centers, integrated curriculum, and cooperative learning. When lists from all grade levels were combined, it was revealed that teachers in this district are very interested in using, or using more frequently, integrated curriculum, learning centers, and cooperative learning strategies.

When asked why they were not using these strategies as much or as well as they would like, answers fell into four main categories. These categories were planning time, time in the day (curriculum was too full already), lack of training, and lack of materials. Responses were tabulated by percent and are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Reasons for Not Using Strategies
by Percent

	Pre-kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
Planning	70	62	67	55	60
Time in Day	23	30	72	75	80
Training	65	65	65	55	60
Materials	70	80	65	55	67

Other reasons mentioned for not using these strategies were that the children were not ready, that teachers didn't feel that they had permission from either their principal, district or TEA, and that either the class was too large or the space in the classroom was too small. Discipline and classroom management was considered an issue by only a few teachers. It is interesting to note that primary grade teachers make less use of these strategies than prekindergarten and kindergarten and their reasons more often reflected a feeling of lack of time in the teaching day. In discussing this at grade level meetings, first grade teachers, for the most part, were overwhelmed by the amount of things they needed to teach the children. They often mentioned the fact that the children were "not ready" so teaching the skills took longer. Second and third grade teachers often mentioned the need to prepare students for standardized tests. Prominent in all discussions was the idea that the teachers must "keep" all children at "grade level". When asked to define "grade level" most teachers used district curriculum guides, TEA learner outcomes, and expectations from past experience teaching at a particular grade level as defining criteria.

Learning Centers

By definition, learning centers are areas in a classroom that provide resources, space and ideas for children to work on projects, practice skills, or

explore materials through play. When used to their full capacity, learning centers provide students with individualized learning opportunities and teachers with opportunities to extend learning and perform observation based assessment. On the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked to describe the centers in their classroom and explain the procedure for their use. The number of centers available on a regular basis in classrooms ranged from 0 to 10. Table 4 displays the availability of centers by grade level.

Table 4
Number of Learning Centers Available
by Percent

	Pre-kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
none	0	0	1	5	27
1-3	0	0	66	82	70
4-6	55	60	33	13	3
6 plus	45	40	0	0	0

In describing the procedures used in operating learning centers, three models emerged, the free-choice model, the rotational model, and the enrichment model. In the free choice model, children choose both the center and the activities within the center during center time. In this model, the teachers role is to move among the centers and facilitate learning through observation and extension. In the rotational model, children are divided into groups and rotate as a group through the centers. Within each center there are one or more activities, and these activities are generally designed to be completed independently. In some cases, children visit several centers in one day. In other cases, children visit one center one day and other centers on successive days of the week. Materials in the center generally relate to the skills being taught and are considered as independent practice. Teachers stay with one group and do a direct teach lesson. In the enrichment model, activities are placed in centers and children may choose to go to centers only after completion of their assigned work. Materials are designed for independent practice or for enrichment. Teachers use this time to work individually with children who are finishing their assignments. Table 5 shows the prominence of each model by grade level and by percent.

Table 5
Learning Center Models
by Percent

	Pre-kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
Free Choice	10	24	0	0	0
Rotation	90	76	24	12	8
Enrichment	0	0	76	88	92

Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers reported changing the activities weekly to correspond with weekly units. First and second grade teachers also reported changing activities in centers periodically, about once a month. In the third grade classrooms, teachers reported that centers and center materials were permanent throughout the year.

Learning centers could be used in more effective and developmentally appropriate ways in prekindergarten, kindergarten or the primary grades by allowing children more choices within each center, by using centers to facilitate learning the learning concepts through exploration and discovery, and by providing teachers observation time. It has been reported earlier that many teachers in all grade levels are interested in learning more about the effective use of learning centers. The use of learning centers is a valuable and developmentally appropriate strategy that is not being utilized to its fullest across all grade levels.

Project Approach

The Project Approach is not a new strategy, but one that has resurfaced in the past few years because it fits well with the goals of developmentally appropriate practices. A project is an in-depth study of a particular topic that one or more children undertake. Work on projects extend over a period of days or even weeks, involve children in advance planning and problem solving, and lead to numerous activities and opportunities to practice and learn math, literacy, physical, and social skills in an authentic context that has relevance for the children involved. This approach also provides teachers with multiple opportunities for observation-based assessment.

The project approach is valuable for early childhood programs because it addresses the intellect of young children, strengthens the opportunity to acquire positive attitudes towards learning and self-as-a-learner, provides rich content for conversation, offers a context for peer interaction and cooperation, and makes teaching and learning a collaborative effort. Projects are also culturally relevant when they stem from the children's own interest and environments.

Tabulation of the teacher questionnaires showed that only 6% of prekindergarten teachers, 15% of kindergarten teachers, 19% of first grade teachers, 17 % of second grade teachers, and 18 %of third grade teachers use a project approach on a regular basis. During grade level meetings, the project approach was defined and teachers were asked again about their usage. Even though teachers at all grade levels better understood what was meant by the term, they still maintained that their use of the strategy was occasional or never. When asked why, prekindergarten teachers and kindergarten teachers stated planning time and lack of readiness on the part of the children as the main reasons for not using this strategy. First grade teachers stated that planning time, materials, and their own lack of training formed barriers to utilization of this strategy. Second and third grade teachers stated overwhelmingly that there was "too much else to cover in the curriculum". The project approach is another strategy that is not being utilized to its fullest across all grade levels.

Multi-age Grouping

The practice of teaching young children of various ages together has been determined to be a highly effective and developmentally appropriate organizational strategy for many reasons. In *The Case for Mixed-Age Groups* (1990), Katz, Evangelou and Hartment list the following:

- Mixed-age grouping resembles family and neighborhood groupings, which throughout human history have informally provided much of children's socialization and education. Many young children now spend relatively little time in either family or neighborhood settings and consequently are deprived of the kind of learning made possible by inter-age contact.

- Research, although incomplete, indicates that social development can be enhanced by experiences available in mixed-age groupings. Leadership and prosocial behaviors have been observed to increase.
- Current concepts of cognitive development—the "zone of proximal development" and the cognitive conflict imply that children whose knowledge or abilities are similar but not identical stimulate each others thinking and cognitive growth.
- Research on peer tutoring and cooperative learning indicates that interaction between less able and more able children ("novices" and "experts") benefits all individuals both academically and socially.
- Mixed-age grouping relaxes the rigid, lock-step curriculum with its age-grade expectations, which are inappropriate for a large proportion of children. Furthermore, mixed-age grouping might also lead to a reduction of screening and standardized testing in the early years.
- Mixed-age grouping has been used successfully with young children in the United States and abroad (e.g. Britain and Sweden) (Katz, et. al., 1990, Executive Summary)

Mixed-age groupings compel educators to organize learning activities and curriculum so that individuals and small groups of children can work alongside one another, and so that individuals can make different contributions to group efforts. The mixture of ages in one classroom increases teacher's awareness of developmental discrepancies and erases the faulty assumption that children of the same age need to learn the same thing at the same time (Katz, 1990).

Within the realm of mixed-age grouping, there are many strategies that can be employed. Among these strategies are peer tutoring and cooperative learning. The first, second, and third grade teachers at three of the elementary schools reported having a successful peer tutoring program operating in their classrooms. However, no teachers reported using these techniques across grade levels. With one exception, principals report multi-age strategies only in relationship to inclusion projects with special education students and English Language Development (ELD) classrooms. The one exception is a pilot study that mixes kindergarten, first and second grade students in a daily learning center and language arts program. Not only are multi-age strategies under

utilized, but a majority of the teachers reported these strategies as not appropriate for their grade level. Table 6 displays the full information gained from the teacher questionnaire.

Table 6
Utilization of Multi-Age Grouping
by Percent

	Pre-kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
Daily Use	1	3	8	2	5
Weekly Use	0	2	1	2	2
Occasional Use	.05	5	9	13	11
Never Used	32	30	24	25	54
Not Appropriate	40	43	37	43	26
No Response	27	17	21	15	2

These results indicate that although multi-age strategies are effective and do enable students to make continuous progress, it will take time and training for teachers in this district to accept and use them effectively. Furthermore, sequential academic curricula, such as that currently found in the early childhood programs of this district, do not support mixed-age grouping strategies. Therefore, before implementation of any form of mixed-age grouping, the curriculum will need to be broadly conceived and designed to promote continuous progress for students. This curriculum should be thematically based and oriented toward projects and activities that encourage children to work collaboratively across grade levels, using the structures of peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Most importantly, parents need to receive information and guidance about the benefits of mixed-age grouping before their children move into such experiences.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning Strategies provide several of the components critical for effective learning in young children. These components include peer collaboration as a vehicle for social and cognitive skill development and multiple opportunities for problem solving. Cooperative learning, like learning centers, has many different models of implementation. Some teachers consider any group work cooperative learning. For maximum effectiveness, the group structure and the work assigned to the group must to be designed to promote positive interdependence in a heterogeneous group and individual responsibility. Cooperative learning, when used effectively, becomes more than a strategy but a way of organizing classroom activities, schedules, and environments to promote collaborative learning. Teachers across all grade levels reported high utilization of this strategy (See Appendix G). However, less than 25% of the classrooms visited showed evidence of the full embodiment of strategy. As noted earlier, cooperative learning was among the three strategies teachers, across all grade levels, most often expressed interest in using and learning more about.

Grouping Patterns

Because children learn at their own rate and through constructing knowledge through interaction with peers and adults, developmentally appropriate strategies suggest the use of small groups and informal instruction for most of the day instead of large group and formal instruction. Teachers were asked to rate by percentage the amount of time spent in small group, large group and individual instruction, and to rate the time spent in dire ct and indirect instruction. The results of these questions are displayed below.

Table 7
Total Group Instruction by Percent

	Over 75 Percent	50-74 Percent	25-49 Percent	Under 24 Percent
Prekindergarten	0	32	55	13
Kindergarten	0	38	42	20
First Grade	26	65	9	0
Second Grade	36	45	19	0
Third Grade	39	42	19	0

Thirty-two percent of all prekindergarten, 38% of all kindergarten, 91% of all first grade, and 81% of all second and third grade teachers spend more than 50% of their teaching day in total group instruction. This represents a high level of total group instruction across all grade levels but is particularly alarming in regard to the primary grades. When asked about this phenomena, many first, second and third grade teachers mentioned the need to "cover the material" in the curriculum and keep the children at "grade level". Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers talked mostly about the need for children to develop listening skills and learn to stay on task. Many teachers discussed the idea that

they felt they were expected (by their principal) to spend a large amount of time in total group instruction. One reason teachers gave for feeling this expectation was their perception that the form used during teacher observation and evaluation specified total group instruction.

On the teacher questionnaire, teachers were also asked to comment on whether or not they were satisfied with the way time was allocated in their classroom. Seventy-five percent of prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers were satisfied. Less than 50% of teachers in the first, second, and third grades were satisfied. Teachers that were dissatisfied mentioned, both on the questionnaire and in the interview, that the most prevalent reason for their dissatisfaction was their desire to do more informal teaching or small group work. When asked why they couldn't, the most frequent answer was that they didn't really understand how they could cover the material needed and spend time with small groups.

Impressions and Issues

When considering all information concerning both curricula and teaching strategies, several themes reoccur. First, teachers are heartfelt in their desire to meet the needs of all individual students, but they feel conflict between the need to cover the curriculum and keep students on grade level and the need to individualize instruction. Second, although they know about many strategies, many have fallen into a pattern of using "efficient" strategies, the main one being direct instruction to the total group. Third, most teachers can not articulate the value of informal learning activities such as play, investigation, and drama in relationship to teaching academic skills, and fourth, while many teachers do feel that children can learn independently, they do not fully understand how to implement independent learning activities and maintain a high level of accountability(i.e. grade the students).

In order to move to more developmentally appropriate practice in this district, several issues need to be considered and resolved. These issues include budgets for developmentally appropriate teaching materials, language of primary instruction, and staff development. A discussion of each issue follows.

Developmentally Appropriate Learning Materials

All teachers want more teaching materials, but teaching in a developmentally appropriate way requires some very special kinds of materials. To do projects in cooperative groups or to have "hands-on" activities in learning centers, concrete items are needed. Some of these are often consumable and some of them are needed on a spontaneous basis. Most teachers reported spending much of their own money providing materials for spontaneous projects that follow the interests of the children or make the learning activities more "hands-on".

Materials, however, are not the only way to provide "hands-on" experiences for young children. Field trips are important aspects of early

childhood education. Not all field trips need to cost money. Many times walks or visits to businesses or even homes in the neighborhood provide children with real, authentic, learning experiences that are personally relevant.

There does need to be some discussion, on a district and a campus level, concerning budgets for early childhood instructional materials. Teaching in a developmentally appropriately way does not necessarily cost more but the costs are different because the needs are different. For example, cooking supplies are more valuable than text books, art supplies are more important than workbooks or ditto sheets, and daily walks around the playground to count and classify the wild flowers is an example of one of the most cost-effective and intellectually stimulating activities in early childhood programs.

Language

In order to be effective and developmentally appropriate, early childhood programs need to demonstrate respect and support for the cultures and language of the children and families they serve. According to MISD records (February, 1994), the Bilingual/ESL Program serves 36.5 % of the student population. For programs to be effective, they must be congruent with sound research and pedagogical, and developmental approaches to second language acquisition. Early childhood programs should be designed with the understanding that, contrary to popular belief, young children develop proficiency—which is not the same as fluency—in a second language very slowly. Young children need several years of schooling before reaching an academic par in English with their English-only counterparts (Wolfe, 1990).

Research indicates that learning that takes place in the child's primary language does not slow down the children's acquisition of English. Instruction by means of the primary language in preschool through primary grades promotes and develops the deeper cognitive skills that predict future success in the mainstream (Wolfe, 1990). There is evidence that many language minority children develop academic language in English as a result of academic language that has first been developed in their primary language (Cummins, 1981). A common misconception is that language minority children who appear to quickly acquire English fluency have developed sufficient language proficiency to operate in academic contexts in English. It is important to understand that language used by childrer for conversational purposes and playground talk is quite different than language needed for academic achievement in school. Therefore, language minority children may become conversationally fluent in English before they develop the ability to understand or use English in academic situations. Research demonstrates that it can take approximately two years for children to develop this conversational fluency in a second language (Cummins, 1981). Academic proficiency, however, may take an additional five years for a total of seven years. Therefore, second-language learners may need from five to seven years to develop the academic English that is needed to participate fully and on an equal par with native English speakers in a classroom. In any event, transition to English in the content areas should be based on the individual's need and proficiency in a number of areas and not tied to a date or to a single test as is the current practice.

At the present time, prekindergarten children enter the program on the basis of either low socioeconomic status of the family or limited English proficiency as measured by the Language Assessment Scale (LAS or PreLAS in the case of 4 year olds). This test (DeAvila & Duncan, 1985) measures a child's oral language proficiency in English and gives five levels of functioning from Level 1: No English; to Level 5: English Proficient. When a child's English proficiency is measured as levels 1 through 3, the child is placed in a Bilingual/ESL program. Children are grouped by levels and remain grouped in those levels until they exit the program.

The primary language of instruction is determined by the level of the group; the lower the level, the more Spanish will be used in instruction in the content area. The goal, as perceived by most teachers, is to transition these children into all-English reading instruction by March of the first grade using the MISD Spanish/Enflish Reading Transition Test as the indicator. This means that in second grade bilingual classrooms, Spanish is used only for clarification not for instruction. This also means that most children who enter the program as monolingual Spanish speakers at prekindergarten are receiving instruction mainly in English the fourth year they are in school (second grade). Because the LAS only measures oral language proficiency and research shows that academic proficiency in the second language lags as much as three years behind oral proficiency there are probably many children in second grade classrooms who are receiving instruction in English but are not able to take full advantage of that instruction.

This is a very complex situation and, as with every other situation involving young children, involves the parents' aspirations for their children. Parents generally want their children to be proficient English speakers and see early instruction in English as the means to that goal. Research concerning second-language acquisition and the advantages of becoming truly bilingual needs to be collaboratively studied by parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Any change in strategies and program design will only be effective after there has been a change in the understanding of the need for change by all effected by the change.

A basic premise of developmentally appropriate practice is individual appropriateness, which in the case of many children in this district, would indicate a longer period of time in which instruction was presented in the child's primary language. Therefore, a developmentally appropriate program for young children in this district will hinge on the successful resolution of this issue.

Staff Development

There is a significant body of research that indicates that specialized knowledge, particularly in the area of child development, is necessary to teach young children effectively. The state of Texas currently requires an Early Childhood Endorsement only for teachers of prekindergarten and kindergarten children. However, the same knowledge base is required of primary teachers in order to successfully implement developmentally appropriate practice. Two

hundred and fifty three teachers reported their educational and teaching experience through the teacher questionnaire. Of this number, only 26% of the teachers reported having the Early Childhood Endorsement. By grade level, the breakdown is as follows:

75% of prekindergarten teachers,
96% of kindergarten teachers,
11% of first grade teachers,
6% of second grade teachers, and
16 % of third grade teachers.

Nine percent (22) of the teachers reporting hold a Master's Degree but only 6 of those degrees were in Early Childhood. It is interesting to note that 28% of the teachers reporting have only taught at one grade level and have taught that grade level for over five years. This may be one reason for such strong grade level expectations on the part of many teachers. If you have not taught more than one grade level, then your understanding of continuous progress education may be limited.

Knowing how to implement many strategies that are generally considered developmentally appropriate is not enough. The successful implementation of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs depends upon a teacher being able to make a match between a child's developmental readiness for certain information and the strategy used to facilitate his/her learning. Therefore, knowledge of child development and constructivist learning theory is very important for teachers of young children and should be a large part of all in-service training.

In-service training, on development or on teaching strategies should be on-going. Teachers, like children, learn by doing and teachers, like children, are all at different stages of development regarding their understanding of development and strategies. Any training given to facilitate the development of new strategies should be continuous and involve reading, observation, experimentation, and peer feedback and support. Teachers also need to perceive, before investing in new learning, that what they will be learning they will be able to utilize immediately in their classrooms. Therefore, they need support from their administrators and they may need materials to begin the implementation process.

In order to develop the best condition for continuous progress education for children, teachers, across all grade levels, and administrators should frequently engage in pure "discussions". The purpose of these discussions should be to clarify misconceptions about requirements or expectations and to develop common ground for discussing the needs of children. One of the best ways to develop this common ground is by reading and discussing the same book or article. Therefore, staff development time should not be seen as just time to learn a new strategy, but as time to renew learning about children, their learning and development through discussion and sharing.

When discussing issues with teachers, they would often say, "You need to tell the administrators that." And in discussing the same issues with administrators, they too, would often say, "The teachers need to hear that." These discussions also need to take place between campus and central office staff. There are some conflicting messages, particularly regarding curriculum. One example is in the kindergarten language arts curriculum. The district is moving towards a whole language philosophy in literacy instruction, and yet the curriculum document outlines a letter of the week approach and supplies many skill based ditto exercises. This represents a conflict in philosophies. It takes several years to become comfortable with whole language teaching and there are many teachers in the district who need, at least for a while, the structure of a letter of the week curriculum.

However, there are teachers who have developed beyond this point, and they need to "feel" permission to move closer in their teaching to the whole language philosophy. So the problem is not that there is a conflict in the philosophies as represented by the curriculum documents, but that conflict is not discussed and teachers do not always perceive they have permission to "move on" in their own development of teaching strategies.

Chapter Five

Assessment and Parental Involvement

The main purpose of assessment in early childhood programs is to facilitate instructional planning for the individual child and for the class. Other purposes include the identification of children with special needs, communication with parents, and program evaluation and accountability. Assessment should not be considered independently from curricula and teaching strategies but be fully integrated into the daily program planning.

Developmentally appropriate programs for young children address the "whole child"—the physical, social-emotional, and intellectual domains. Therefore, appropriate assessment strategies gather information on a broad range of the child's activities based upon a continuum of development for acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. Information about individual learning strategies and attainment of specific goals and objectives complete the assessment profile.

Several characteristics of young children affect assessment. First, young children are acutely sensitive to their surroundings and may be easily distracted or have emotional reactions to the assessment procedure that skew their behavior. To be reliable, assessment must take place in a variety of situations that reflect the objectives of the program, make the child comfortable, and reflect the child's typical range of activities. Second, young children are characterized by rapid developmental changes, consequently, assessment must be frequent and ongoing. Third, young children have limited interest in being assessed, especially when the assessment procedure interferes with the normal range of movement, talk, or expression of feelings. Therefore, assessment needs to be informal and unobtrusive.

The difference between formal and informal assessment is the level of intrusiveness into children's lives—the degree of constraint placed on their behavior. Assessment for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade children should always be informal in nature as opposed to formal assessments which take the form of standardized or teacher-made objective tests. Observation is the most effective and unobtrusive strategy for knowing young children, and observation-based assessment strategies are the most congruent with developmentally appropriate practice. These strategies include performance assessment, which evaluates how children carry out specific tasks that simulate, represent or replicate real-life challenges; documentation, which is the collection of evidence of children's learning; and authentic assessment, which is the evaluation of children's performance in a real-life context.

Systematic observations and subsequent reflection on those observations can lead to the collection of reliable information without intruding on or transforming daily classroom life and without constraining the children's behavior so as to limit their demonstration of competence. Evidence of learning and development gathered through informal methods of assessment are

assembled into portfolios. An assessment portfolio consists of a collection of a child's work, and represents what that child has accomplished over a period of time. Portfolios can contain teacher observation narratives, checklists of developmental benchmarks, and samples of the child's work. This portfolio becomes the main vehicle for reporting to parents. Portfolio assessment and review values the cultural and linguistic diversity of each child because it focuses on the child's growth and development and not on comparing that child to others or to a "norm".

Assessment practices observed and reported by teachers in prekindergarten and kindergarten meet most criteria for DAP. Assessment techniques are informal in nature and match the goals and objectives of the current curriculum, are generally performance based, value cultural and linguistic diversity, and are generally used to inform daily planning. Fifty percent of all prekindergarten teachers and 55 percent of all kindergarten teachers report using portfolios for assessment. Progress is reported to parents every six weeks using either a progress report or a report card. Both forms are standardized and give information concerning development in the physical, social-emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic domains. The forms are bilingual, Spanish/English, and the report card outlines the philosophy of the program and gives clear explanations concerning what is being evaluated. Letter or number grades are not given but each child's progress is reported on a continuum ranging from successful (S) to needs improvement (N). The progress report includes space for the teacher's comments. Conferences with parents are held on a needs basis—if the teacher feels a need or the parent feels a need.

Assessment in the primary grades, however, is very different than in prekindergarten and kindergarten even though the children, in many cases, are just a few months older. Because numerical grades (which are equivalent to letter grades) in subject areas are required as early as the first six weeks of first grade, assessment in the primary grades is not driven by the curriculum or the philosophy, but by the form of the report card. It is common to see first grade teachers giving tests in spelling or arithmetic in order to formulate a numerical grade. Observing the child while engaged in solving a math problem or composing a letter to a friend would be less obtrusive assessment strategies and would provide more information about the child's motivation and problem solving skills. What the teacher would learn from this experience is much more meaningful to the teacher, the parent and the child than a numerical grade.

Two curriculum changes have recently happened in this district. There has been a movement towards a whole language philosophy in the language arts program and a movement towards an interdisciplinary curriculum. Both changes reflect a developmental philosophy because the focus of instruction is on matching teaching strategies to individual needs. Assigning number grades in subject areas in early childhood is in direct conflict with these philosophies. In the *Executive Summary* of the *Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood*

and Elementary Education, The Texas Education Agency recommends that school districts:

> "refrain from the use of letter grades during the early childhood and elementary years; assess children's progress toward established performance standards through teacher observation narratives, checklists and portfolios containing samples of children's work; develop a structured method of communicating to parents." (p. 18, Draft Copy, 93)

Primary teachers, particularly first grade teachers, recognize this conflict in philosophies and are concerned about this issue. Even though 37% of first grade teachers, 31% of second grade teachers, and 23% of third grade teachers report using portfolio assessment, in grade level discussion few teachers reported feeling competent in the areas of portfolio, performance, or authentic assessment.

One issue teachers often mentioned in regard to authentic assessment is time. Most teachers did not feel they had the time to do the observations and student conferencing necessary if authentic assessment was to be used for program planning. One reason for feeling a lack of time is the felt need to "cover the curriculum" and keep children "at grade level". A second issue teachers talked about was their lack of knowledge of observation techniques, and just knowing what to look for. This relates to a general need on the part of teachers and administrators for a better understanding concerning the development of literacy, language, mathematics and how young children construct their knowledge through interactions with people and objects.

Teachers need support and training to learn developmentally appropriate assessment techniques that are congruent with developmental teaching. This is not something that can happen quickly at a workshop or even a week-long seminar. Developing appropriate assessment techniques will take time and experience. Teachers, as well as children, need to construct their knowledge in a developmental way by going through successive layers of "being wrong". The first step, however, is to develop a new format for reporting that focuses on the progress of a child's development in all domains and informs the teacher as to the kinds of observations and evidence she/he needs to collect.

The second step in developing appropriate assessment strategies is to develop a continuum of learning in all areas that focus attention on what children are actually doing and away from categorizing their performance by arbitrarily assigning grades. This continuum should be coordinated with the curriculum and not only cross grade levels, but connect grade levels in a way that allows children to make continuous progress in their education throughout the early childhood years.

Developing a cross-level continuum takes a major step in the elimination of retention because it focuses attention on the rate and direction of

developmental progress in all areas (See Appendix H for current statistics regarding retention rates in this district). This approach does not imply that a child will be given "time" to develop, but that development will be continuously monitored and teaching strategies adjusted as the child progresses through a sequential developmentally-based curriculum.

In discussing retention rates in grade level meetings, teachers consistently talk about the need to "cover the curriculum" and "get children ready" for the next grade. It seems that a major focus of early childhood teachers is directed towards preparing the child for what is to come instead of focusing on what the child is presently doing.

When discussing the current research that shows retention to be ineffective, kindergarten, first and second grade teachers overwhelmingly discounted this research and continued to assert that retaining a child in kindergarten, first or second grade is in the best interest of the child because what will happen in the next grade will be too frustrating (i.e."the child just isn't ready"). This points out the degree to which grade-level expectations, teaching activities, and assessment strategies, are predetermined, at least in the minds of many teachers, before students arrive. Therefore, the developmental level of the students become secondary to what teachers believe should be happening in a particular grade level. This suggests a need for cross-level communication and coordination to create a continuous developmetally-based curriculum with common teaching and assessment strategies which change, not because of the chronological age of the children, but because of the development of any one child.

Parental Involvement

There are good reasons for teachers to want parents involved in the education of their children. Encouraging parent involvement aids teachers in building children's self-esteem, reduces discipline problems, and increases children's regard for themselves as learners (Epstein, 1986). Research on parent involvement and school effectiveness show that the family provides the primary educational environment for the child. However, when families are involved in schools, an important link is formed. Information and support can flow from home to school and from school to home, strengthening both environments for the child. Therefore, involving parents in their children's formal education improves students' achievement (Phillips, Smith, & Witte, 1985; White 1985; Kieff,1990).

Characteristics of developmentally appropriate parent and community involvement strategies include enabling parent and family involvement in education through providing programs that encourage volunteering in the school, responding to needs of the community by sharing facilities and coordinating the need for before and after school care, involving parents in advisory roles in school decisions, accommodating cultural and linguistic diversity in communications, and networking with health and human service agencies to coordinate efforts for families and children.

McAllen ISD has a strong parent and community involvement program. Each school has a parent volunteer program, has parents as members of advisory councils, and has active parent organizations. All campuses have either parent involvement specialists or counselors who work directly with home-school involvement issues and provide parent education. Campuses provide information and services to families in their primary language.

The district supports a Night Study Center on several campuses. This program offers English as a Second Language classes and parent education classes. Parents attend classes while district students receive extra help on homework. Transportation and child care for younger children is provided.

The district has organized a Partners in Excellence Program which pairs community organizations and local businesses with schools. Each business provides help for schools in a variety of ways.

The district has many strengths regarding parent and community relationships. However, one aspect of parent involvement that should be strengthened is parent conferencing. At present, conferencing takes place on a "needs basis". Therefore, not all parents are coming to the school (or teachers going to the home) on any regular basis. Parents have as much information to offer teachers as teachers have to offer parents. The two views of the child are extremely important in providing a continuous progress education not only from grade to grade, but from home to school. If assessment systems are revised to include portfolios, performance and authentic assessment strategies, parents and teachers will need to have the opportunity to meet and discuss the child's progress.

Although time consuming, parent conferences are a more efficient use of time than report cards or narrative summaries because the exchange of information between parent and teachers develops a clearer picture of the strengths and needs of the child and results in a greater collaboration between the teacher and the parent on behalf of the child (Kieff, 1990). The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education has recommended at least one parent conference each semester (TEA, 1993). Again, time is an issue. Many districts use an early-dismissal format to provide teachers with time for preparing and conducting parent conferences. Time for conferencing should not be seen as additional time added to the teacher's day or as an additional duty, but as a reallocation of instructional time.

Chapter Six

Summary and Recommendations

The recent focus on early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practice has created talk about a new paradigm for restructuring the elementary school. Models of this new paradigm generally take the form of a dichotomy, pitting the old practices against the new practices. For example, Elkind (1989) talks of the "psychometric philosophy" versus the "developmental philosophy", the Kentucky Department of Education (1991) talks about the "traditional program" versus the "new primary program", and the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education (TEA, 1993) visualizes the "old system" and the "new vision". Although these dichotomies are helpful in determining the appropriate direction for change needed in certain areas, they do not specify how to create the change, or how fast to move towards change. Furthermore, not everything in any system needs to be changed.

The current early childhood program at McAllen ISD has many strengths. One source of strength comes from the parent and community involvement programs operated at both the district level and the campus level. A strong framework of collaboration has already been built between the community, parents and the schools.

A second source of strength for the early childhood program is a conscientious and dedicated professional staff. Administrators have already been involved in numerous staff development activities aimed at furthering their knowledge base and understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practice. Teachers have also been involved in both campus-based planning and in district curriculum planning. Both teachers and administrators show a willingness to evaluate existing programs and make plans for positive change.

The class size of the Chapter I schools is another strength for the early childhood program. Instructional aides, shared among grade levels, would help facilitate interactive teaching strategies in the other buildings. The fact that all schools have available space on their grounds to facilitate the creation of outdoor learning areas such as gardens and dramatic play areas is still another strength of the program. The development of these areas will allow teachers to capitalize on the natural curiosity and interest young children have in the world around them.

It was the original intent of this study to describe each campus and give individual profiles and recommendations for movement towards a more developmentally appropriate program. However, because of the standard use of a curriculum based upon skill development and grade level expectations and an assessment and reporting system that supports that curriculum, every school is operating much like every other school, even though the diversity among the students is great. That is not to say that each school does not have its own unique personality and every principal has his/her unique energy and

leadership style: They certainly do. However, a major premise of developmentally appropriateness is individual appropriateness and each campus must look at its unique population and adapt the curriculum and develop organizational strategies that suit the individuals served by that campus. For this reason, the recommendations to improve the appropriateness of the early childhood program will be general in nature and aimed at the district level. Three major areas need to be addressed regarding movement towards a more developmentally appropriate program.

I. Philosophy

The statement that early childhood education includes prekindergarten through third grade must become more than a statement. At the present time, first, second, and third grade teachers do not really consider themselves as early childhood teachers. The gap between the expectations for children in kindergarten and children in first grade is enormous, in the minds of the teachers, in the minds of the parents, and I believe, in the minds of the children.

Three activities would help bridge this gap.

1) Include prekindergarten through third grade teachers in collaborative staff development activities. Promote a greater articulation between grade levels in each building and across the district by creating early childhood planning committees on each campus.
2) Support teacher-originated projects that are based in sound developmental theory and promote cross grade level collaboration. Support could take the form of release time for planning, funds for experience-based activities, or even lowering the class size to promote the use of interactive teaching strategies.
3) Put a priority on time for teachers and administrators to discuss expectations and perceptions of what is required and what is not required in regard to curriculum and teaching strategies. Time should also be set aside to study together as a campus. These studies can include topics in child development, innovative strategies, or new grouping patterns.

II. Curriculum—Assessment—Teaching strategies

The curriculum needs to be conceived as a continuum of progress in the areas of language, literacy and mathematics. Curriculum activities must have intellectual integrity and provide for growth in the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive domains. Assessment and curriculum philosophies must be correlated. Teaching strategies must be designed to create in-depth understanding and skills should not drive the curriculum, but be taught as children need them to accomplish authentic tasks and projects.

Five activities would help accomplish this task.

1) Formulate a continuum of development for literacy and math education that not only utilizes grade level expectations as benchmarks, but also provides for the continuous progress of the child.
2) Correlate assessment procedures with the curriculum philosophy. Implement authentic assessment strategies and parent conferencing, and eliminate numerical grades in first and second grades.
3) Design the district curriculum guide lines to allow teachers to individualize for the needs of their own classrooms. Incorporate ideas for projects, integration of motor activities, and the integration of art, music and drama activities that are not only enriching but provide substance for academic learning.
4) Insure the use of the student's primary language as the language of instruction until the student has developed an efficient use of academic English.
5) Review budgeting procedures to allow teachers easy access to the concrete materials needed to facilitate learning and development through projects, learning center activities and field trips. Provide teachers with the resources (indoors and outdoors) to create teaching environments and utilize teaching strategies which allow the integration of physical, social-emotional, and cognitive learning.

III. Staff Development

Staff development activities need to focus first on child development and learning theory and then on teaching strategies. When teachers and administrators truly understand how children learn, then knowing how to create the environment and facilitate learning will become somewhat intuitive.

Current research on teacher development and change suggests that knowledge alone does not create long-term changes in teaching practices. This means that just reading about a new strategy or even seeing the strategy modeled by an experienced teacher will not make a great impact on the learning environment in the classroom. Effective staff development strategies combine cycles of reading, reflection, discussion with peers, practice, and more reading.

It is important to consider that change in one classroom will only be effective for the students in that classroom for the time they are in that classroom. To be most effective, building personnel should focus on a few areas of change and development, work collaborative to bring about that change, and support each other through the process. This model promotes ownership and creates motivation.

Three activities would help accomplish this task.

1) Continue education and staff development regarding child development and constructivist theory for teachers, administrators and parents. Everyone involved in a young child's education needs to fully appreciate the unique nature of the child's mind and the tremendous amount of learning that the child has accomplished before he/she comes to school.
2) Encourage campuses to initiate self-study programs.
3) Encourage cross-grade level focus groups that meet to share ideas concerning developmentally appropriate strategies.

The work of creating a more developmentally appropriate program for young children is not simply a matter of changing curriculums or teaching strategies. Creating a developmentally appropriate program involves becoming acutely aware of how young children see their world and go about making sense of it. To understand how each child is thinking and learning is to understand how to match the curriculum and teaching strategies to facilitate optimal development.

To create a truly developmentally appropriate program will take full collaboration between administrators, teachers, parents and the community. It will also take time. Change is a process which generally takes from five to seven years to complete and has three major phases. The first phase is awareness. During this phase, strengths and weakness of the existing program must be examined and issues and concerns need to be identified, prioritized, and brought forward for discussion. A strategic plan must be created that outlines goals and objectives for change, formulates a reasonable timeline, identifies a funding source for the activities that lead to implementation, and delegates responsibility for different parts of the plan to individuals or committees.

During the second phase of change, alternative organizational patterns and innovative curriculum and teaching strategies need to be explored. Pilot programs should be created to experiment with new strategies. Evaluation of these innovations should be ongoing. The last phase is the implementation of those programs and organizational strategies that proved effective.

McAllen ISD is currently in the awareness phase regarding the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice. This study has outlined the main strengths and weakness of the existing program and has brought forward issues that need to be discussed. The next step is to organize a committee to create a strategic plan for change. This planning committee should consist of teachers from all grade levels, administrators, parents, community representative, university repre-

sentatives, and representatives from Head Start, Human Services, and the Child Care community.

Young children do think differently than adults or older children. They are busy figuring out their world through explorations and interactions with adults and other children. All efforts aimed at facilitating the intellectual development of children and fostering their natural abilities to construct knowledge are well worth the time, the energy, and the resources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A and B

McALLEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDY
PACKET CONTENTS

FORM	NAME	TO BE COMPLETED BY
MISD F1	Early Childhood Packet Contents	
MISD F2	Overview	
MISD F3	Site Visitation Schedule	Principal
MISD F4	Personnel Information Sheet	P,F, Teachers PK-3
MISD F5	Campus Demographics	Principal
MISD F6	Teacher's Inventory of DAP	Teachers PK-3

Please complete and return forms
F3, F4, F5, and F6
(F4 is attached to F6 for Teachers)
to
MISD
Department of Elementary Education
2000 N 23rd Street
(210) 632-3240

BY SEPTEMBER 3, 1993

McAllen Independent School District
Early Childhood Program Study
Overview

In the past few years, the Texas Education Agency, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Assosiation for the Education of Young Children have published documents describing developmentally appropriate environments and strategies for teaching young children, birth through age eight. MISD is currently conducting a study of its Early Childhood Program. A major goal of this study is to assess the current state of knowledge and practice regarding child growth and development, learning, and developmentally appropriate practices on the part of building administrators and teachers. A second goal is to determine the level to which developmentally appropriate practices are currently being implemented on a campus by campus basis. A third goal is to determine continuity of appropriate practices across grade levels, prekindergarten through third grade. This study is qualitative in nature. Data will be collected through:

* A study of district documents (i.e. curriculum, policies, testing data, demographic data, parent involvement programs)
* Teacher's Inventory of Developmentally Appropriate Practices
* On-site visitation
* Semi-structured interview with building administrators
* Focus group discussions with teachers
* Classroom observations.

After data has been collected and analyzed, a profile of appropriate practices and recommendations for further implementation of appropriate practices will be created for each campus. This profile will be discussed with building administrators and/or members of the early childhood team during a follow up visit in December and January. These follow-up meetings will be held before the final report and recommendations are submitted.

Tentative Timeline

August, 1993	Initiate on-going study of district demographics, policies, and curriculum
August 18,	Distribute surveys to buildings
September 3,	Buildings return surveys to MISD's Department of Elementary Education
September 8, to December 1	On-site visitation by consultant
December & January, 1994	Follow up visits by consultant to individual campuses
January, 1994	Final Report and Recommendations submitted to MISD

Site Visitation Schedule

Campus _____

The consultant will make a day-long visit to each campus between September 8 , and December 1, 1993. These visits will last from approximately 8:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the afternoon. In preparation for this visit, please schedule time in the morning for a semi-structured interview with the principal and another with the facilitator. These interviews will last approximately one hour.

Also, schedule several focus group meetings with as many teachers (pre-k through 3rd grade) as possible. These session will be informal in nature and last from 15 to 20 minutes each. The rest of the consultant's day will be spent observing classrooms and other school activities. The consultant would like to meet again with the principal and/or facilitator for 10 to 15 minutes towards the close of the day.

Please choose 3 dates from the following list and rank them as first choice, second choice, and third choice. Return this form with your packet. On September 6, you will be notified, by telephone, of your scheduled date. A master list will follow as soon as possible.

If you need to reschedule, please contact
MISD Department of Elementary Education (618-6048).
If you have any questions concerning the process of this study contact:
Dr. Judith Kieff, 381-3401, Office of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Texas-Pan American

Site Visitation Schedule

September 8	_____	October 20	_____
September 13	_____	October 25	_____
September 15	_____	October 27	_____
September 20	_____	November 3	_____
September 22	_____	November 8	_____
September 27	_____	November 15	_____
October 4	_____	November 17	_____
October 6	_____	November 22	_____
October 13	_____	November 29	_____
October 18	_____	December 1	_____

MISD F3
For Principal

Personnel Information

Campus _____

1) What position do you currently hold?

_____

2) How many years experience do you have at the following levels?

Prekindergarten	_____	years
Kindergarten	_____	years
First	_____	years
Second	_____	years
Third	_____	years
Principal	_____	years
Facilitator	_____	years

How many years have you held your current position?

Please list other education-related experiences below.

3) Please check all of the following which apply regarding your educational background and certification.

_____ Emergency Certificate or Long -Term Substitute
_____ Bachelor Degree (please specify major)
_____

_____ Masters Degree (please specify major)
_____

_____ Certification came through a degree-granting program
_____ Certification came through an Alternative Certification Program
_____ Early Childhood Endorsement
_____ Bilingual Endorsement
_____ Other endorsement (please specify)

MISD F4
For Teachers (Pk- 3rd), Principal, Facilitator

CAMPUS DEMOGRAPHICS

Please complete this demographic profile of your campus.

CLASSROOMS	# BILINGUAL	# REGULAR	TOTAL	TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO

Please describe the use of specialists (music, physical education, library, counselors, parent involvement specialists,..) and the use of paraprofessionals at your campus.

Describe any multi-age grouping patterns at your campus.

Describe parent involvement activities unique to your campus.

Please attach samples of typical schedules for each grade level.

MISD F 5
For Principal or Facilitator

Teacher's Inventory of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The Texas Education Agency, The National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have recently published documents describing developmentally appropriate practices for educating young children, birth through eight years of age. MISD is currently conducting a study of its Early Childhood Program. The inventory of Developmentally Appropriate Practices you are being asked to complete is an important part of this evaluation. It will be used to compile a profile of appropriate practices currently being implemented in your building. This will form the basis of a strategic plan to further the implementation of appropriate practices both at individual sites and on a district-wide basis.

It is, therefore, important that your responses reflect the current state of practice in your classroom, not what you would like it to be or what you think it should be. It is also important that you begin to identify the factors you see as blocking the movement towards more appropriate practices. Please be assured that all responses will be held in confidence and only summative (based on all responses) information will be reported.

It is the intent of the designer of this questionnaire that you give your first and most immediate response to the questions. We are looking for the current state of knowledge and practice regarding child growth, development, learning, and developmentally appropriate practices.

In field tests of this instrument, responders were able to complete the inventory within 20 to 30 minutes. Please fold, staple and return this form to the Department of Elementary Education. Thank you for the time and energy you have given to this inventory.

MISD F6
For Teachers Pk-3

Strategies Inventory

Grade Level _____
Campus _____

How often do you apply the following strategies in your classroom? Please check all columns which apply.

Daily
Weekly
Occasionally (less than 5 times a year)
Never
Not appropriate at my grade level

Strategy	Daily	Occasionally	Never	Not Appropriate
Integrated Curriculum				
Cooperative Learning				
Learning Centers				
Multi-age Groupings				
Thematic Instruction				
Manipulatives				
Multisensory Activities				
Projects Approach				
Writing Journals				
Writing Process				
Work Sheets				
Portfolio Assessment				
Whole Language				
Sustained Silent Reading				
Socio-Dramatic Play				

List other strategies that are used regularly in your classroom.

MISD F6
For Teachers Pk-3

Of these strategies, or others that you know of, which would you like to be using on a more regular basis? Please list.

What factors are preventing you from developing and using these strategies?

Please list the Activity Centers (Learning Centers) which are permanently available in your classroom and give a brief description of the procedure students follow in using these centers.

List any supplies or materials you feel you need to become a more developmentally appropriate teacher at your grade level.

Time Allocation Survey

Grade Level _____
Campus _____

In your classroom. about how much of your work day are you involved in (estimate %)

_____ Direct teaching
_____ Monitoring classroom activities
_____ Observing children
_____ Transitional activities (moving from one activity to another)
_____ Discipline related activities
_____ Record keeping
_____ Planning
_____ Monitoring school activities
_____ Other (please specify)

Are you satisfied with this allocation of time? If not, please explain how you would like to see it change. Also, what factors prevent you from making the change?

In your classroom, about how much of the student's day is spent in (estimate %)

_____ a direct teaching situation (individual, whole group, or small group)
_____ an indirect teaching situation (individual, whole group, or small group)

MISD F6
For Teachers Pk-3

Again, are you satisfied with this allocation of time? If not, please explain how you would like to change this and what are the factors preventing you from making this change?

In your classroom, how much of the student's day is spent (estimate %)

_____ working in small groups
_____ working in a large group
_____ working individually
_____ other (please specify)

Are you satisfied with this allocation of time? If not, please explain how you would like to change this allocation of time and what are the factors preventing you from making this change?

Developmentally Appropriate Practices
General Thoughts

Grade Level _____
Campus _____

How would you define developmentally appropriate practices as it relates to your grade level?

Are you satisfied with the developmentally appropriateness of your own classroom? Please explain your answer.

Please explain your definition of the concept " play" and describe the role of play in your classroom.

On the back of this page, please make any other comments regarding developmentally appropriate practices in your grade level, your building, or your district.

MISD F6
For Teachers Pk-3

Appendix C
Site-Visitation Schedule
Record of Activities

	Date of Visit	Principal Interview	Observation	Grade Level Meetings
Rayburn	September 8	x	x	x
Alvarez	September 13	x	x	x
Navarro	September 15	x	x	x
Roosevelt	September 20	x	x	
McAuliffe	September 22	x	x	x
Jackson	October 4	x	x	x
Garza	October 6	x	x	x
Escandon	October 8	x	x	x
Thigpen	October 13	x	x	x
Bonham	November 29	x	x	
Wilson	October 25	x	x	
Zavala	Ocober 27		x	
Houston	October 29	x	x	x
Seguin	November 3	x	x	x
Milam	November 15	x	x	
Fields	November 17		x	x
Gonzales	November 22	x	x	x
Crockett	December 1	x	x	

Appendix D
Principal/ Facilitator Interview

Principal/Facilitator_____

Campus_____

Date of
Interview_____

Timebegun_____ Time finished.

How long have you been at this campus?

Tell me about this campus?
What are the students like?

What are the parents like?

What are the teachers like?

What are you proudest of?

What is your biggest challenge?

Philosophy

In regard to the early childhood program? What do you consider early childhood? (Organization of the school teams)

In your mind, is there a difference in how the younger children learn?If so, what is that difference?

What role does the child have regarding his learning?

What motivates a young child to learn?

What is most important for young children to learn?

What would you see as your major goals for the early childhood classes? Are these different than for the older grades?

How are social (nature of learning)development needs met in your school?

How does the curriculum relate to the child's real life?

Do you make any adaptations to the curriculum adopted by the district?

Is there a fixed daily schedule - is there flexibility within that schedule?

What is your view of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum used?

How do you feel the teachers are adapting to it?

Do you think it fits the needs of your students? In what way? Or in what way is it not fitting the needs of your students?

How are workbooks and ditto sheets used in the classroom.

Grouping Patterns

How are class lists formed?

What different grouping patterns do you have within the school?

How are these groups formed?

Describe your bilingual classes?
What are the goals?

What are the expectations for the students regarding first second language learning?

Are the strategies used in these classrooms different than those used in the regular classroom?

Are you salified with the bilingual program that is being offered here?

Scheduling
Timed expectations or child paced?
How are schedules determined in your building?

Are you happy with the overall schedule of the early childhood classrooms?

How would you change things if you could?

Strategies, Management and Teacher Evaluation
What strategies do you expect to see when you visit the early childhood classrooms?

what do you see as the role of play in the early childhood classroom?

How do you expect the children to behave?

What do you expect the children to be doing?

What do you expect the teacher to be doing?

What would a well managed first grade look like?

What would a well managed prekindergarten look like?

Describe the discipline policy in this school?

Materials and Supplies
Do you feel your early childhood classrooms have the kinds of equipment ad materials they need?

What changes would you like to see made?

Assessment
Describe grading and reporting polices of your school?

How are teachers assessing the students.

Community service agencies collaboration
Is there a system to help parents be in contact with service agencies that they need?

Home-School communication
Describe-home school programs
How do you communicate with parents? How often ?
How frequently do parents come to school? Do you have a parent involvement specialist?

Appendix E

Facilitator's Teaching and Administrative Experience in Years

	Pre-K - K	1-3	Faciitator	EC Endorsement
ALVAREZ		12	4	
BONHAM		2	6	
CROCKETT	7		6	
ESCANDON			4	X
FIELDS	7.5	9	3	X
GARZA	1	4.5	5	X
GONZALEZ	10	0.5	2	X
JACKSON	8		2	
MILAM	1	8	3	X
NAVARRO			4	
RAYBURN	1	7	2	X
ROOSEVELT			3	
THIGPEN		7	3	X
WILSON	3	5	6	X

Appendix F
Principal's Administrative and Teaching Experience in Years

	Teaching Pk &K	Teaching 1-3	Principal	Facilitator	EC Endorsement
ALVAREZ			5	2	
BONHAM			18		
CROCKETT	1	2	4	4	
ESCANDON		17	1	8	
FIELDS			30		
GARZA	1	6	1	6	x
GONZALEZ	10		3	8	x
HOUSTON		5	3	6	
JACKSON	2	5	3		
MCAULIFFE		5	8	4	
MILAM	6	4	6	3	
NAVARRO	7		4	1	x
RAYBURN		1	1	5	
ROOSEVELT			9	2	
SEGUIN			7	2	
THIGPEN		17	10	2	
WILSON	1	12	7	3	
ZAVALA		1	4	4	

Appendix G
Use of Strategies on a Daily or Weekly Basis
By Percent

	Pre-K	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade
Integrated Curr	77 Percent	51 Percent	91 Percent	83 Percent	91 Percent
Coop Learning	66 Percent	74 Percent	74 Percent	69 Percent	70 Percent
Learning Centers	66 Percent	77 Percent	57 Percent	51 Percent	35 Percent
Multi-age	17 Percent	5 Percent	9 Percent	11 Percent	5 Percent
Thematic	94 Percent	100 Percent	50 Percent	78 Percent	57 Percent
Manipulatives	94 Percent	65 Percent	76 Percent	79 Percent	72 Percent
Multisensory	94 Percent	63 Percent	65 Percent	60 Percent	51 Percent
Project Approach	6 Percent	15 Percent	19 Percent	60 Percent	18 Percent
Writing Journals	61 Percent	65 Percent	51 Percent	86 Percent	69 Percent
Writing Process	39 Percent	51 Percent	56 Percent	84 Percent	70 Percent
Work Sheets	44 Percent	63 Percent	64 Percent	73 Percent	90 Percent
Portfolio	50 Percent	55 Percent	37 Percent	31 Percent	23 Percent
Whole Lang	72 Percent	74 Percent	56 Percent	64 Percent	54 Percent
SSR	39 Percent	23 Percent	35 Percent	66 Percent	62 Percent
Dramatic Play	50 Percent	60 Percent	0 Percent	23 Percent	19 Percent

Appendix H

Retention Rate By Grade Level and Year
* Projected

	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade
1987-88		29	11	5
1988-89		33	11	8
1989-90		71	42	20
1990-91		126	62	45
1991-92		142	72	44
*1992-93	15	75	24	7